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# PREFACE.

This Work is an attempt to arrange, under a new classification, an interesting portion of our literary and dramatic annals, and to give the origin and antiquities of an office, which, if it in some reigns fell deservedly into contempt, was in earlier times graced by the genius of Jonson and Dryden, and has of late been brought into honourable connection with the names of Southey, Wordsworth, and Tennyson.

The object of the Authors has been to produce a Work popular in style, but to be relied on for its accuracy. That some errors may be found in a volume, the contents of which are spread over such a space of time, and which make mention of the works of so many writers, will not be matter for surprise.

Had the Authors been intent upon mere *book-making*, it would have been quite possible to have constructed two or three volumes out of the materials which have been

sparingly (and it is hoped judiciously) used. Their aim has rather been to give the most concise accounts, which might be consistent with clearness, of the lives of such of the Poets-Laureate as have met with biographers, and, in collecting from multifarious sources the narratives of the career of those who have not been so fortunate, to record nothing which was not in itself valuable, or interesting from its relation to literary, dramatic, or political history. Nothing would have been easier than to have imparted to the Work, by a copious parade of references, an appearance of industry and research, if not of learning.

LONDON,
JULY 21, 1853.

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# LIVES

OF

# THE LAUREATES.

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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

The vivid imagination of the Greeks created a mythology, which has coloured the sentiments of all succeeding generations. To understand many of our vernacular phrases and allusions, we must even now go back to that wonderful life and learn something of its tendencies and meaning. In its commonest forms it overflowed with poetry. All nature ministered to its embellishment. Every stream had its naïad: the forest, the plain, the mountain and the ocean-cave were thronged with imaginary habitants; while the diversified products of the earth had each their guardian divinity, and their consecrating use. The conspicuous glory of the Olympic conqueror was typified by the silvery olive; and what symbol so appropriate to indicate the immortality of Verse as the unfading laurel? A myth was readily supplied. The tree was at one time a nymph seen and beloved by Apollo. The bashful Thessalian fled

before his eager pursuit, and ere overtaken an interposing power shielded her from harm, and the virgin stood transformed into a bay-tree. The disappointed god wreathed for himself a garland from its boughs, and pronounced it for ever sacred to himself.

The Romans adopted from the Greeks the practice of rewarding eminent merit by the presentation of some symbolical chaplet. They, however, enlarged it into an elaborate system. A variety of crowns, formed of various materials, were held forth as the worthy guerdon of numerous warlike feats and accomplishments; and certain rules were prescribed which the candidate or the champion was strictly required to observe. We have no very authentic assurance that poets were thus rewarded under the republic; but later, Statius three times gained the prize in the Alban contests, instituted or revived by Domitian, and on such occasions a garland of laurel leaves was the usual acknowledgment of musical or poetical success. The custom most prevailed, however, after the revival of letters in the middle ages. Learning then appeared to many with more than a syren's fascination. Its progress and its pursuit became the sole subject of their concern. No form or ceremony was omitted that might feed a useful vanity or kindle the ennobling emulation. Such forms then, were not idle or meaningless. At a time when profound learning existed side by side with an almost hopeless barbarism; any fiction that surrounded the individual with dignity, or challenged respect for his occupation, was more valid to withstand wrong, than the fitful vigilance of a prince, or the frail enactments of ill-executed laws. Hence originated the pomp and the splendour of the mediæval laureations to which we shall have occasion presently to advert.

In England the title of poet-laureate was then never conferred, as is now the case, by royal appointment; it was

a scholastic distinction, and of many poets-laureate, the King merely selected one to publish his praises and to attend his court. It was simply a university degree.

The origin of degrees, as is the establishment of the universities by which they were conferred, is involved in considerable obscurity. Such institutions have no type in the classic era. As Christianity prevailed over Paganism, the schools connected with cathedral churches, and afterwards with monasteries, became the sole nurseries of general education. When Bishops became temporal lords and monks accumulated wealth, those seminaries were neglected; and scholars eschewing the rule of their negligent masters, withdrew from their several societies and themselves opened independent places of teaching. In this way the University of Paris had its origin.

These establishments were encouraged and prospered. Nobles endowed them and kings granted immunities; but though schools of *universalia studia*, as had been the cathedral and monastic seminaries, it was long before they were erected into universities or corporations; and this word University we first find applied to the school at Paris, in a decretal of Pope Innocent III., dated the beginning of the thirteenth century. They then obtained powers of self-government and of conferring degrees of honour and precedence within their several republics. These degrees which at first were only the old distinction between teacher and scholar became civil honours, were conferred with great pomp, and were in some cases placed on a par with nobility itself. "When a Bachelor was created Master," says Wood, "the Chancellor gave him the badges with very great solemnity, and admitted him into the fraternity with a kiss on his left cheek using then these words, 'In tibi insignia honoris tui en librum, en cucullum, en pileum, en denique amoris mei pignus, osculum; in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sanctus.' That being

done, he was to consider what was to belong to the reverence of so great a name as Master, viz., what he ought to have in relation to his habit, because for fifteen days he was to walk the streets in a round cap, not a plaited cap; neither in a collobe or tabard. He ought also to be so chaste and modest in word, look and action, that he may resemble a virgin newly espoused. Also that he was not to go alone; but always—chiefly within these fifteen days—have with him an Esquire or supporter of his body or at least a companion.

"When the ultimate day of proceeding was come, care was to be taken that the Inceptor should be commended by a venerable company of Masters with a brief and well-ordered speech, and that also the Master under whom he proceeds should use decent and fruitful words, lest the venerable company of Masters should be reviled by the standers-by, for the miscarriage and ill deportment of one Master redounds to the dishonour of all the rest."

Laureation, which had accompanied degrees in law and medicine, was reserved eventually for the graduate in grammar. It was in fact, his Master's degree in that faculty which included rhetoric and the art of versification. These degrees were more common at Oxford than at Cambridge, and there are various instances of their being taken so late as the sixteenth century. Thus by the University Registers at Oxford, we find that on the 12th March, 1511, one Edward Watson, student in grammar, obtained a concession to be graduated and laureated in that faculty, provided he composed a Latin comedy, that is, any short poem not of a tragic cast, or one hundred Latin verses in praise of [illegible] University. The next year Richard Smyth obtained [illegible] like concession on condition that at the next public Act [illegible] should affix one hundred Latin hexameters to the great

gates of St. Mary's Church; and Maurice Byrchenshaw, scholar in rhetoric, obtained the same honour provided he wrote the customary number of verses, and promised not to read Ovid's "Art of Love" to his pupils. On the 5th June, 1511, John Bulman graduated in rhetoric, and a wreath was placed on his head by the Chancellor of the University. Skelton was laureated at Oxford, and some years afterwards, viz. in 1493, he obtained public permission to wear his laurel at Cambridge, or as we now should term it, took an *ad eundem* there; thus Churchyard writing in 1568 says:

> "Nay, Skelton wore the laurel wreath,
> And past in schoels, ye knoe."

Whittington, a graduate in rhetoric, in his panegyric on Wolsey, says:

> "Suscipe Lauricomi munuscula parva Roberti."

(Accept this slight tribute from Robert the Laureate.) Through the more general use of English, the Latin language gradually became an accomplishment rather than a medium of communication; and such degrees ceasing to be useful were no longer solicited or conferred. The last instance was in 1514, when one Thomas Thomson was laureated.

In the annals of the German Empire, we meet with several instances of poets being presented with a crown of laurel. Frederick III. conferred it on Conradus Celtes Protuccius, the first poet-laureate of Germany, who by a patent of Maximilian I. was made Superintendent or Rector of the College of Poetry and Rhetoric in Vienna, with power to bestow the laurel on approved candidates. The honour being purely civil, emanated solely from the supreme authority, and the power of conferring it was occasionally invested in Counts Palatine and others, as a

delegated portion of the imperial prerogative. Rodolph II. by his letters patent, elevated two professors of the law at Strasburg, George Obrechtus and his son Thomas, to that rank; and the licence to grant the degrees of Doctor, Licentiate, and Bachelor of both laws, of Master and Bachelor of Arts, and of Poet-Laureate was inserted in the patent, as appurtenant to the dignity. It was long a debated question among the learned whether such degrees were the same in their nature, and consequently were attended with the same privileges as those conferred by a University, and the power itself like all other authority was at length contested by the Popes, and Pius V. by a bull denied it to the Counts, and deprived the recipients of all the privileges such degrees might otherwise have conferred upon them in the Church.

The learned research of Selden has enabled us to present the reader with the following account of the manner in which the ceremony of laureating was performed at Strasburg in the seventeenth century. In the year 1616 one John Paul Crusius had petitioned for the laurel. Obrechtus, the Count Palatine, in a formal instrument dated 20th December, reciting how degrees are conducive to the advancement of learning, and how Crusius having already attained the dignity of Master in Arts, now through his skill in versifying, deserved also the laurel of Poetry; through the power and licence given him by the Emperor, appointed the 23rd of December for the presentation. In the document which is extant, he beseeches and entreats all who have any affection for learning, and especially all noble and illustrious lords, counts, and barons, all academic dignitaries, all doctors, licentiates, professors, masters and others, not only to dignify the ceremony by their presence, but also to assist him with their prayers for the safety of the Church, the Schools and the Commonwealth. On the day appointed, Crusius stept forward before the as-

sembled magnates, arrayed in all the pompous insignia of their quality, and recited a short Latin poem petitioning for the honour of the laurel. The Count then in a long Latin oration extolled the poetical art, and addressing Crusius, proceeded in graceful panegyric to exhort him ever to merit and sustain his high reputation; that Justice herself might pronounce him worthy of the honour, nor even Envy question his claim. When the murmur of applause had subsided, Crusius again stood forth to recite an original poem, on a subject selected by himself. This composition extended to about three hundred lines in elegiac metre, its theme was "Quam nihil omnis homo," and it was termed his exercise for obtaining the laurel. The Count, to give the greater assurance that he had full power and authority to confer the title, produced his letters patent from the Emperor. The public notary solemnly inspected the seal and subscription, and read the document aloud to the meeting. The Count then briefly summing up the authority given him, observed that whoever desired to be crowned with the laurel, must first take the oath of allegiance to the Emperor and his successors, which he ordered the notary to read and Crusius carefully to listen to. When Crusius had taken the oath, the Count in another Latin oration proceeded to the main business of the day, and placed the laurel upon the head of the candidate, and a ring of gold upon his finger, pronouncing him Poet-Laureate, and confirming him in all the privileges of the degree. The Count then made another speech, expatiating upon the laurel and the ring; and Crusius returned thanks in a poetical recitation which concluded the elaborate ceremonial.

All patronage given to letters requires the nicest tact and judgment in its application. The indulgence of the emperors was abused by the lavish and indiscriminate distribution of poetical honours; and the very means designed

as an encouragement of the art, tended ultimately to cover it with ridicule. The learned Paulus Hachenbergius, in his "Dissertations on the state of Mediæval Germany," a monument, as his editor Franckius justly observes, of stupendous diligence, has commented on the evil consequences of this injudicious liberality. Referring to the time of the promulgation of the constitution of Maximilian, concerning the privileges of poets, he writes: "Ab eo tempore magnus poetarum proventus in Germania fuit, qui Latino æque ac patrio carmini studium addixêre: plures procul dubio et meliores futuri; nisi coronæ laureæ etiam ad imperitos delatæ essent, et divinam cœlestemque artem ipsa canentium vilitas paupertasque prostituisset." To check the abuse, it was ordained that those only should be crowned who had obtained testimonials of their capacity from a board of at least three examiners. But this rule was relaxed, and it was observed that poets-laureate were as plentiful in Germany as poets were rare in all countries. The wits of Italy and Germany launched the most ferocious satires ("de sanglantes satires" is the strong expression of the Abbé du Resnel) alike against those who received and those who conferred the title. We do not read, however that the privilege was ever suspended, and so late as 1621, the Emperor Ferdinand II., in augmenting those of the University of Strasburg, especially gave it the right of creating poets-laureate, before enjoyed by the Counts Palatine. That body was not slow to exercise its authority. The examination of three candidates who presented themselves was referred to the Faculty of Philosophy; and it was arranged the degrees in the two branches should be conferred at the same time. The ceremony was announced. The degrees in philosophy were conferred, and a concert of vocal and instrumental music divided the labours of th day. The Syndic of the University then made an ing nious speech upon the connection between philosophy and

poetry, and the three candidates proceeded to give public proofs of their sufficiency. The Dean then rose. He applauded these favourites of the Muses, and bitterly reflected upon what had happened: that, through the ignorance and the corruption of the times, the sacred laurel, the peculiar privilege of the Cæsars, was prostituted and sold, so to speak, to men whose harshness, prosiness, and insipidity rendered them unworthy of the name of poets. But he would not hesitate to assure his audience that the University of Strasburg, in the case of the three poets now before them, could never be exposed to such reproaches. The Chancellor next proposed three oaths, which were severally taken; 1. that they would sustain the privileges of the University; 2. that they would not accept the crown from any other University, nor from any Count Palatine, even though he were an hereditary one; and 3. that, in all their compositions, they would propose for their object, the glory of God and the honour of his Imperial Majesty; that they would banish from their work anything that might hurt another's reputation; and that in their conduct, nothing should escape them which might be turned to the disgrace of literature or the dishonour of their University. He then created and crowned them poets-laureate, and accorded them all the honours, ornaments, privileges, prerogatives, and immunities, in the best possible form, in such manner as other poets-laureate use and enjoy them, notwithstanding all laws and customs which would seem to derogate from such imperial grace and concession.

The laureation of Petrarch in the Capitol, will naturally suggest itself to the reader's mind. This proceeding appears to have been an act of homage, and a public assurance of protection on the part of the city or senate to the most distinguished poet and man of letters of the age. Petrarch had coveted some such distinction, and Robert of

Anjou, King of Naples, aware of his desires, had urged the Roman Senate to offer such a recognition of the poet's merit. Accordingly, a notification of their intention reached Petrarch, at Vaucluse, on the 23rd of August, 1340. The Neapolitan monarch was an enthusiast in letters, and Petrarch embarked at once for the court of his patron, carrying with him his Latin epic, "Africa." He there demanded a public trial of his qualifications, and offered to reply, during three successive days, to all questions that might be proposed to him in history, literature, or philosophy. He passed his examination with distinguished success; and the King, pronouncing him fully worthy of the proposed triumph, took off his robe of state, and threw it around Petrarch, desiring him to wear it on the day he was to receive his crown. He proceeded to Rome, and on Easter day, 8th of April, 1341, slowly ascended the Capitoline Hill, amid the acclamations of the assembled city. Twelve youths, belonging to the principal families in the place, preceded him, reciting extracts from his poems; and the Count Anguillara, one of the senators who governed the town during the residence of the Popes at Avignon, after having made a speech to the people, placed the laurel on his head, and crowned him as poet-laureate and historiographer. He then recited a sonnet on the heroes of ancient Rome, and returning to the Church of St. Peter, dedicated his chaplet on the altar, and travelled home slowly by land, luxuriating in his renown. He was presented with letters patent by the King of Naples and from the Senate, authorizing him to read and explain ancient books, compose new ones, write poems, and wear his laurel crown whenever it pleased him.

The poet had sought this honour partly, perhaps, from vanity, but chiefly for protection. We read in his letters how some had called him a necromancer, some a heretic, because he read Virgil. Accusations or even suspicions of

such a nature were then no light matter. Verse-making was looked upon by many as nearly allied to magic, and such unholy tampering with unseen agencies called for reprehension or summary punishment. These opinions were not counteracted by the conduct of those in authority, and the Dominican Solipodio, when Grand Inquisitor, was the scourge and the terror of poetasters. Petrarch escaped from Scylla to fall into Charybdis. Though relieved from the imputation of witchcraft, he feelingly complained that envy had stepped in to increase the number of his calumniators. Even the great Maffei could not contain his spleen. He was a scholar, and one of the first Latin poets of his time, and some epistles Petrarch had written appeared to him excessively absurd. "Having read them," says he, "I could not help laughing; and who would not laugh, to see a man, who can only be famous through the assent of those who concur to praise him, fool enough to make his reputation depend on the certificate of an ignorant notary?" Maffei had not been guilty of such folly. He had never been offered the laurel.

But the Romans, in the dearth of more manly occupation, were delighted with any idle or frivolous spectacle, and undignified burlesques would occasionally divert the listlessness of an unoccupied but lively people. About a hundred years after Petrarch's coronation, one Camillo Querno visited the city, bearing as his credentials an epic poem, with the title of "Alexias," extending to the imposing length of twenty thousand lines. These he proposed to repeat for the edification of the Latin gentry; a day was fixed for the purpose, when, to give the performance greater *éclat*, he retired with a select circle to a small island in the Tiber. He there proceeded with the recitation, assisting his labour by frequent and copious draughts of wine, till at the conclusion of the feat a crown of mingled laurel, vine, and cabbage leaves was placed on his

head, and he was dubbed Archipoeta by his jocose auditory. Leo X., hearing of the circumstance, was delighted with the jest, and invited Querno to the pontifical palace. His voracious appetite was whetted rather than satiated by the sumptuous dishes sent to him from the papal table; but before receiving his wine he was required to extemporize a certain number of Latin verses, an art in which he possessed a marvellous facility, and for every false quantity, a proportion of water was added by the unfeeling orders of his entertainer. On one unhappy occasion, holding forth a goblet pallid with immoderate dilution, the poet assuaged his despondency by the following epigrammatic conceit:

"In cratere meo Thetis est conjuncta Lyæo:
Est Dea juncta Deo, sed Dea major eo."

Such refined torture on the part of His Holiness amused their Eminences the Cardinals, and once excited some literary sparring between the accomplished Leo and his dependent, which the pious care of Paulus Jovius has preserved for the amusement of posterity:

"Archipoeta facit versus pro mille poetis,"

once indignantly yet proudly exclaimed Querno.

"Et pro mille aliis archipoeta bibit,"

was the ready and reproving reply.

"Porrige," exclaimed the bard in despair,

"Porrige quod faciat mihi carmina docta, Falernum."

The pontifical punster smiled as he observed:

"Hoc etiam enervat debilitatque *pedem*,"

and the worsted victim at once withdrew from the unequal contest.

Some of our readers may be surprised to discover a poet-laureate among the Popes. Pius II., however, attained that dignity, and has left his written testimony to the fact. In a letter to his friend, Cardinal Sbigneus, Bishop of Cracow, he confesses his former devotion to the Muses, and his composition of elegies, eclogues, nay, even a satire. He assumed not, however, the designation of poet of his own accord, nor used the title until the Emperor Frederick, having seen some of his letters, presented him with the laurel at Frankfort. "Edidimus et nos aliquando versus; scripsimus elegias, eclogas, satyram quoque dictavimus; non tamen poetæ nomen propria temeritate suscepimus, nec prius hoc titulo sumus usi quam nos Fredericus Cæsar apud Franckfordiam, visis quibusdam epistolis nostris, laurea nos donavit."

Thus England, Germany, and Italy had their poets-laureate, nor was the title unknown in Spain. Nicolas Antoine mentions one Arias Montanus, who received the laurel at Alcala, and asserts that the custom was established in the University of Seville. Le Tassoni speaks of Ausias March, a Catalan, who was poet-laureate, and as famous in his time as Petrarch had been eighty years before. It may not be deemed out of place here to mention Vargas the Spaniard, who, for an epithalamium he wrote on Queen Mary's marriage with Philip at Winchester, received a pension of two hundred crowns for life. France alone appears never to have known the title, and this peculiarity has elicited some amusing and characteristic remarks from a French writer, jealous for the honour of his country. Referring to a formula used at Strasburg, the Abbé du Resnel asks, "What are these privileges and immunities which were conferred with such emphasis?" and replies, "It is not easy to give any idea." The worthy Abbé had forgotten that he had before confessed to the tangible realities that accrued from them, but his

patriotism at that moment must have been dormant. These immunities might have been in the first instance usurped, but that they were ultimately recognised by law is evident from the constitution of Maximilian, "De Honore et privilegiis Poetarum," referred to by Hachenbergius. Such, however, must necessarily in process of time have become more and more contracted, until they gradually became extinct, and a law of the Emperor Philip expressly declared that such could no longer be claimed. "Poetæ nulla immunitate donantur." The weighty dispute upon this simple text will afford an illustration of legal subtlety. The learned Cujas and his followers maintained that it by no means implied that poets were not most worthy of such, but that there was no actual legislative enactment upon the point. The opposite school proceeding farther in the reaction against such privileges, maintained that the clause was not to be regarded as noticing an omission merely, but was a peremptory exclusion of poets from any and all immunities whatever.

To return, however, to the Abbé du Resnel. The impossibility those in power labour under to confer always real honours upon meritorious persons, drives them often to invent imaginary ones. But when they who govern are fortunate enough to have as much generosity as power, it is by solid recompenses and not by exterior ornament and vain titles that they nourish emulation among those who consecrate their talents to the advantage and glory of the state. Although the French poet Ronsard is ordinarily represented with the laurel crown, yet the Abbé could not discover he have ever received one in due form, though the University of Paris believed it had the right to grant it. "Nevertheless," says he, "no poet perhaps was ever more honoured than he was. Charles IX. condescended to write poetry in his praise, in which he assured him the

art of versifying ought to be held in greater honour than the capacity to rule.

> "L'art de faire des vers, dût-on s'en indigner,
> Doit être à plus haut prix que celui de regner."

"A prince," resumes the excited Abbé, "who could think and express himself after this fashion, was he under any necessity to have recourse to the laurel, to assure immortality to a poet he judged worthy of it? And, on the other hand, the signal favours the generality of our kings, especially since Francis I., have heaped upon those who cultivated the Muses; the highest dignities in church and state, which often become their recompense, inspires them with an indifference to a crown, which was granted to poets in other countries, only because the donors had usually nothing better to give them." Oh, incomparable land, in which a sonnet or a satire is repaid with archbishoprics and dukedoms! Well may the Abbé exclaim: "It is not surprising, we have had many poets amongst us, who have exulted in the title of Poet to the King; whilst we have had no one who has taken that of Poet-Laureate!"

Chaucer obtained from King Edward III. the grant of a pitcher of wine, charged on the port of London, to be received daily during his life. This was commuted by Richard II. into an annual payment of twenty marks; but it does not appear from the letters patent, that the allowance was in acknowledgment of the poetical merit of the recipient. On his return from abroad, where he had probably made the acquaintance of Petrarch, he styled himself, Poet-Laureate; but the title was probably nothing more than a poetical assumption; as Skelton, writing of Gower, *Chaucer* and Lydgate, winds up his description with the line:

> "They wanted nothing but the lawrell."

The great eminence of this poet has induced some writers to take his laureateship for granted, forgetful of the fact, that in those times poetical merit was even nominally no qualification for the honour. Skill in Latin versification was the essential requisite. Petrarch relied upon his "Africa." The university exercises were, of course, in Latin, and poets-laureate were only expected to celebrate their patrons in that tongue. The language fell into disuse, and the degrees became obsolete; the designation was wrested from its original meaning, and survives solely in its present acceptation.

From very early times, there was an officer attached to the court, termed the King's Versifier. Richard I. took with him to Palestine one William the Foreigner, who was styled an excellent poet of that age, to sing the renown of his crusade. Edward II., in his advance on Scotland, was accompanied by his versifier Baston, a Carmelite friar of Scarborough, described by Bale as "laureatus apud Oxonienses," who was to celebrate his conquest of that country. He wrote a poem on the siege of Stirling Castle, but was captured, and compelled to change his views, and to write on the contrary side. "Jussu Roberti Brusii tormentis compulsus erat, ut contrarium scriberet, quasi Scoti de Anglis triumphassent." This he did ingeniously, though with reluctance, and thereby obtained his release. The Scotch must have had some relish for humour even in those days. Wale the versifier, panegyrised King Henry I. and the park which he made at Woodstock. In Henry III.'s reign, we first find a record of an annual stipend being paid to that officer. A French minstrel, Henry of Avranches, received six shillings a day (equivalent to seven and sixpence of the present currency) as the King's Versifier. Master Henry, as he is termed, must have been a man of note, and consequently had his enemies. In one of his poems he had reflected on the

boorish manners of the denizens of Cornwall. The insult was taken up by one Michael Blancpaine, *i. e.* Whitebread, or Whitbread, a Cornish man, with great spirit. It is amusing to witness the atrabilious rancour of the literary character manifesting itself in those far-off ages. Michael, in a Latin poem recited before the Abbot of Westminster and other high ecclesiastical dignitaries, tells Master Henry how he had once termed him the arch poet, but that henceforth he will only call him a poet; nay—and he waxes wroth as he approaches his climax—he shall be dubbed a petty poetaster! He then launches out in a virulent attack on his person, much in the style of Churchill's "Epistle to Hogarth."

We first read of the King's poet-laureate in the reign of Edward IV.

John Kay was honoured with the appointment, and by a singular fatality, none of his poetical efforts have been transmitted to our times. The reputation of some of his successors might probably not have suffered had they been equally negligent or careful of their fame. The only specimen of his literary talents that has survived to prop his reputation, is an English prose translation of the Siege of Rhodes, a work originally written in Latin. This was printed in London, in 1506. We have no record of the date of his birth or death.

Andrew Bernard was poet-laureate to Henry VII. and Henry VIII. He was born at Toulouse, and became an Augustine monk. Rymer preserves an instrument by which the King grants to Bernard, poet-laureate, a stipend of ten marks, until he can obtain some equivalent appointment. He received several ecclesiastical preferments in this country, one of which was the mastership of St. Leonard's Hospital at Bedford, which

he owed to the favour of Smith, Bishop of Lincoln, one of the founders of Brasenose. He was likewise made the royal historiographer, and tutor in grammar to Prince Arthur.

In his character as laureate, he wrote an address to Henry VIII. for the most auspicious beginning of the tenth year of his reign, an "Epithalamium on the Marriage of Francis, the Dauphin of France, with the King's daughter," "A New Year's Gift, 1515;" and verses wishing prosperity to his Majesty's thirteenth year. All these were of course in Latin. As royal historiographer, he wrote a "Chronicle of the Life of Henry VIII.," and "Commentaries" upon his reign. He composed likewise some Latin hymns, and was living in 1522.

John Skelton was poet-laureate to King Henry VIII. He was the last who bore the title in its primary signification as a University degree, the last whose qualification for the office was skill in Latin versification.

The little we know of this singular writer only serves to provoke our curiosity. A jesting priest, with coarse humour, his rough laugh tingled rudely in the ear of Wolsey, and cowled monks waxed wroth at his strange and caustic satire. Unconsciously, like Chaucer and others our greatest thinkers, while entertaining a profound reverence for the Romish Church, he was steadily preparing the English mind for the great Reformation. Those men were ever foremost to brand with ignominy the foul corruptions of the papal system; but while abhorring heretics, and justifying persecution, they little dreamed that they themselves were efficient instruments in securing the triumph of the opinions they denounced. So essential are institutions for the preservation of truth, so fondly does human weakness cling to any system that has obtained the sanction of time, that the boldest would

have shrunk from any attempt to deface the unity of that marvellous organization which had assumed an indefeasible dominion over the consciences of men. They thought to purify the stream, and blinked the fact that the fountain-head was poisoned. The struggles of such men awake a painful interest. Enslaved to a system they reverenced as a whole, yet despised in detail; their inner belief jarring with that outer creed which education and custom had fastened round their minds; they inculcate alike a lesson and a warning. The chain that shackled them has been broken, and the thraldom shattered. A spurious liberality would again facilitate the imposition of the exploded delusion.

Skelton was descended from a family anciently settled in Cumberland. He himself was probably born in Norfolk soon after the middle of the fifteenth century. He studied at Cambridge, at Oxford and at Louvaine. At Oxford he was laureated, and obtained the privilege to wear a particular robe. In a satirical poem against his contemporary Garnythe, he says triumphantly:

> "A king to me mine habit gave:
> At Oxford, the University,
> Advanced I was to that degree;
> By whole consent of their senate,
> I was made Poet-Laureate."

The habit here referred to, and which by special favour he was allowed to wear at Cambridge, was a robe of white and green, as we gather from another of his diatribes against the same individual.

> "Your sword ye swear I ween,
> So trenchant and so keen,
> Shall cut both white and green.
> Your folly is too great,
> The king's colors to threat."

The word Calliope was worked upon it, in silk and gold as we learn from the following poem:

"Why were ye, Calliope, embroider'd with letters of gold?
Skelton Laureate, orator regius, maketh this answer:

"Calliope,
As ye may see,
Regent is she
Of poets all,
Which gave to me
The high degree
Laureate to be
Of fame royal;
Whose name enrolled,
With silk and gold,
I dare be bold
Thus for to wear
Of her I hold
And her household;
Though I was old
And somewhat sere.
Yet is she fain,
Void of disdain,
Me to retain
Her servitor,
With her certain
I will remain
As my sovereign
Most of pleasure.
Malgré tous malheurs."

Our author became famous as a scholar and a satirist; and was almost the only popular poet that appeared during the reign of Henry VII. But though a favourite with the lower orders, his talents were equally recognised by the learned, and fostered by the noble. Erasmus styled him the light and the glory of English literature; and Caxton, in his preface to a work published in 1490, pays him the following compliment: "But I pray Master Skelton, late created poet-laureate in the University of Oxford, to oversee and correct this said book, and to address and expound where, as shall be found fault, to them that shall require it. For him I know sufficient to expound and English every difficulty that is therein. For he hath late translated the epistles of Tully, and the

book of Diodorus Siculus, and divers other works out of Latiń into English, not in rude and old language, but in polished and ornate terms craftily, as he that hath read Virgil, Ovid, Tully, and all the other noble poets and orators to me unknown. And also he hath read the Nine Muses, and understands their musical sciences, and to whom of them each science is appropred. I suppose he hath drunk of Helicon's well. Then I pray him, and such other, to correct, add, or minish where as he or they shall find fault," &c.

His talents procured him the appointment of tutor to Prince Henry, and he received substantial encouragement from Algernon Percy, fifth Earl of Northumberland, a nobleman who, in an illiterate period, was an enthusiastic student of letters, and a liberal patron of all contemporary merit.

In 1498 Skelton took orders, and was soon afterwards presented to the rectory of Dysse, in Norfolk; but his conduct was not such as to obtain the approbation of his diocesan. His conversation partook largely of the nature of his ballads; and in the pulpit his propensity to buffoonery and raillery was not held in due subjection. "Having been guilty of certain crimes, as most poets are," quietly observes Wood, Bishop Nykke suspended him from his benefice, and in 1501, it would seem, he suffered temporary incarceration. But though his mouth was closed, his pen was free; and his angry soul threw forth fierce invectives, written in coarse rude doggrel, too pungent to be soon forgotten. These were flung abroad at random, like floating seeds upon a gusty day, and settled and struck root, as chance listed. Many of them were never committed to print, but learned by heart by hundreds, repeated in the roadside alehouse or at the market-cross on fair days, when dealer and customer left booth and stall vacant, to push into the crowd hedging round the itinerant ballad-singer.

Puttenham, the stately critic of Elizabeth's reign, speaking of the jingling carols and rounds sung "by blind harpers or such like tavern minstrels, who give a fit of mirth for a groat," says "such were the rhymes of Skelton, usurping (*i. e.* using) the name of a poet-laureate; being, indeed, but a rude railing rhymer, and all his doings ridiculous. He used both short distances and short measures, pleasing only the popular ear, in our courtly maker we banish them utterly." It was in this consisted his strength. While enjoying with a keen relish the severer beauties of the classic writers, he could indulge in homely galloping verses which went right to the hearts of those he addressed, and made him at once the darling of the populace. Webbe, another critic, appreciated him more correctly. After a reference to preceding writers, he continues: "Since these, I know none other till the time of Skelton, who writ in the time of Henry VIII., who, as indeed he obtained the laurel garland, so may I with good right yield him the title of poet. He was doubtless a pleasant conceited fellow, and of a very sharp wit, exceeding bold, and would nip to the very quick where he once set hold."

His principal objects of attack were the clergy and the Dominicans, until at length, for some reason unexplained, his whole strength was directed against Wolsey. The Cardinal was then luxuriating in the full plenitude of his more than regal pomp, and his imperious demeanour had caused a wide-spread though concealed dissatisfaction. There were no newspapers then to drain off the discontent that in a greater or less degree will always fester in every free community; and any production that gave utterance to the sentiments of an aggrieved class, would be effective in proportion to the extent of the distemper. And, moreover, the sarcasms of an obscure priest, himself in ill odour for certain assumed irregularities of life, must have irritated the sensitive pride of one impatient of reproof or of

contradiction. The Cardinal, at length, "being inveighed at by his pen, and charged with too much truth," issued orders for his arrest, and the satirist fled for sanctuary to Westminster, where Islip the Abbot afforded him an effectual safeguard.

One of the charges afterwards preferred against Wolsey bears a striking resemblance to a passage in one of Skelton's poems. In "Why come ye not to Court?" he writes :

"In the Chamber of Stars
All matters there he mars :
Clapping his rod on the board,
No man dare speak a word,
For he hath all the saying,
Without any renaying ;*
He rolleth in his records,
He saith, How say ye, my lords ?
Is not my reason good ?
Good even, good Robin Hood !†
Some say yes, and some
Sit still as they were dumb :
Thus thwarting over them‡
He ruleth all the roast
With bragging and with boast ;
Borne up on every side
With pomp and with pride."

Turning to the articles of impeachment, we find the fifteenth runs thus : "Also the said Lord Cardinal, sitting among the lords and others of your most honourable Privy Council, used himself, that if any man should show his mind, according to his duty, contrary to the opinion of the said Cardinal, he would so rake him up with his accustomable words that they were better to hold their peace than to speak, so that he would hear no man speak but one or two personages, so that he would have all the

* Contradiction.

† A proverbial expression—a civil answer returned through fear.

‡ Perversely controlling them.

words himself, and consumed much time with a fair tale."

Wolsey was unrelenting in his resentment, and Skelton never ventured from his place of voluntary confinement. He died on the 25th of June, 1529, and was buried in the chancel of the neighbouring church of St. Margaret, where the following inscription was placed upon his gravestone:

"Joannes Skeltonus, Vates Pierius, hic situs est."

He remained, nominally at least, rector of Dysse, till his decease, as the institution of his successor is dated the 17th of the following month.

"This ribald and ill-living wretch," such is the delicate language of Miss Agnes Strickland, who insinuates that King Henry's "grossest crimes" resulted from the "corruption imparted" by his former tutor, had been guilty of an unpardonable enormity in the eyes of the Christian clergy of that day, as perhaps also in the immaculate imagination of Miss Agnes Strickland. The Church that could denounce marriage and countenance brothels was scandalized that one of its ministers should be so obtuse to all notions of decorum, as to enter that state which it had solemnly pronounced dishonourable. Preferring to obey the moral rather than the ecclesiastical law, his name was loaded with disgrace, and "merry Skelton being a priest, and having a child by his wife, every one cried out: 'O! Skelton hath a child, fie on him!'"

His fluctuating reputation has now assumed some definite shape. The high opinion of his contemporaries, of the learned as of the vulgar, was succeeded by the unjust depreciation of the critics in the reign of Elizabeth: he was gradually neglected and almost forgotten. An effort was made in Pope's time to revive his fame by the republication of an edition of his works, but the epithet "beastly,"

applied by the poet, consigned them again to oblivion. After some further lapse of time, some resolute inquirers undertook to read his productions, and his originality and spirit have at length received their due recognition. Of his writings many are lost, and what remain can only be appreciated by one who is both an antiquarian and a poet. His qualities are judgment, fancy, little imagination, but considerable humour. He took the language of low life, and twisted the unformed stubborn tongue with marvellous power, coining words when it suited his purpose, and running riot in his exuberant facility of rhyming. He was conscious where lay his strength.

"Though my rhyme be ragged,
Tatter'd and jagged,
Rudely rain beaten,
Rusty, moth-eaten,
If ye take well therewith,
It hath in it some pith."

His favourite measure was one which was named after him "Skeltonical," and his success in Macaronics was universally conceded. This curious transition style of verse was frequently practised about that time and later. English composition larded with patches of Latin, sometimes of French, in a most extraordinary jumble, would seem absurd to us, but appeared natural then; and the skilful execution of the feat was highly commended. We select a specimen of each of these styles.

The first are extracts from the description of Miss Jane Scroupe, who resided at the nunnery of Carow at Norwich, taken from "The Book of William Sparrow."

"How shall I report
All the goodly sort
Of her features clear
That hath not earthly peer?
The favour* of her face,
Enmew'd† with all grace,

* Beauty. † Refreshed.

Comfort, pleasure, and solace,
My heart doth so embrace,
And so hath ravished me
Her to behold and see,
That, in words plain,
I cannot me refrain
To look on her again.
Alas! what should I fain?
It were a pleasant pain
With her to aye remain.
The Indy sapphire blue*
Her veins doth ennew;
The orient pearl so clear
The whiteness of her lere;†
The lusty ruby ruddes‡
Resemble the rose-buds;
Her lips, soft and merry,
Embloom'd like the cherry,
It were a heavenly bliss
Her sugar'd mouth to kiss.
Her beauty to augment,
Dame Nature hath her lent
A wart upon her cheek.
Who so list to seek
In her visage a scar,
That seemeth from afar
Like to a radiant star,
All with favour fret,§
So properly it is set;
She is the violet,
The daisy delectable,
The columbine commendable,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue.

"But whereto should I note
How often I did tote‖
Upon her pretty foot?
It raised mine heart-root

* The azure blue sapphire.
† Skin.
‡ The beautiful ruby complexion.
§ Wrought with beauty.
‖ Gaze.

To see her tread the ground
With heels short and round.
She is plainly express
Egeria the goddess.
There is no beast savage,
Nor no tiger so wood,*
But she would change his mood,—
Such relucent grace
Is formed in her face;
For this most goodly flower,
This blossom of fresh colour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue.

"So goodly as she dresses,
So properly she presses
The bright golden tresses
Of her hair so fine,
Like Phœbus' beams shine.
It is for to suppose
How that she can wear
Gorgeously her gear,
Her fresh† habiliments
With other implements
To serve for all intents,
Like Dame Flora, queen
Of lusty‡ summer green.
For this most goodly flower,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue.

"My pen it is unable,
My hand it is unstable,
My reason rude and dull
To praise her at the full;
Goodly Mistress Jane,
Sober, demure Diane;
Jane, this mistress hight,
The load-star of delight,
Dame Venus of all pleasure,
The well of worldly treasure;

* Furious. † Gay. ‡ Pleasant.

She doth exceed and pass
In prudence Dame Pallas;
This most goodly flower,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue.

"It were no gentle guise
This treatise to despise,
Because I have written and said
Honour of this fair maid;
Wherefore should I be blamed
That I Jane have named,
And famously proclaimed?
She is worthy to be enroll'd
With letters of gold."

The following passage is taken from "Colin Clout:"

"And how, when ye give orders,
In your provincial borders,
As at Sitientes,*
Some are insufficientes,
Some parum sapientes,
Some nihil intelligentes,
Some valde negligentes,
Some nullum sensum habentes,
But bestial and untaught;
But when they have once caught
Dominus vobiscum by the head,
Then run they in every stead,†
God wot, with drunken nolls;‡
Yet take they cure of souls,
And wot not what they read,
Paternoster, Ave, nor Crede;
Construe not worth a whistle,
Neither Gospel nor Epistle;
Their matins madly said,
Nothing devoutly pray'd;

* Sitientes is the first word of the passage from Isaiah, (ch. LV., v. 1.), which commences the Introit of the mass for Passion Sunday.

† Place. ‡ Heads.

Their learning is so small,
Their primes and hours* fall
And leap out of their lips
Like saw-dust or dry chips.
I speak not now of all,
But the most part in general,
Of such vagabundus
Speaketh totus mundus ;
How some sing lætabundus
At every ale stake,
With welcome hake† and make !‡
I speak not of the good wife,
But of their apostle's life,
Cum ipsis vel illis
Qui manent in villis
Est uxor vel ancilla,
Welcome Jack and Gilla !
My pretty Petronilla,
And you will be stilla
You shall have your willa
Of such Paternoster pekes,§
All the world speaks."

The chief satires of our poet are "The Bowge of Courte," "Colyn Cloute," and "Why come ye not to Court?" The first is an allegorical poem in which a variety of characters are introduced, touched with great powers of discrimination. The second is a denunciation of the corruptions of the Church ; and the fearless way in which he assailed the most glaring abuses of the time, shows a strength of mind and a courage rare in that age of universal obsequiousness to the powerful. "Why come ye not to Court?" is a personal satire on Wolsey. The attack is unsparing, and in places scurrilous, though in commenting upon the extravagant pomp and the insolent demeanour of the grasping Cardinal, even satire itself could but speak the simple truth.

His "Philip Sparrow" is a fanciful piece occasioned by

* The devotions so named.
† A haking fellow means a loiterer.
‡ Make—a companion.
§ Contemptible fellows.

an event similar to the one Catullus has immortalized, and has won from Coleridge the praise of being an exquisite and original poem. His most popular production, however, was "The Tunning of Elinor Rumming." This is a description of an old hostess, who kept an ale-house at Leatherhead in Surrey, with some of her customers; and for coarseness, and at the same time for broad humour, exceeds anything he ever wrote. An interlude called "Magnificence," and "The Garland of Laurel," conclude the list of the larger poems which have survived to our times. In style they are obsolete, and without a copious glossary difficult to be understood, but they are valuable as having once powerfully affected opinion, and interpreted human conviction. The man has passed away, and his works, from their nature, could only be transitory as their author; but the brief glimpse we have of him, the scholar and the buffoon, a priest with his married concubine, and bastardized children, mocking half in anger, half in jest, or it might be in the wantonness of sorrow, at the falsehoods by which he was surrounded, may justly awaken our sympathy, nor fail to suggest a moral.

Skelton being the wag *par excellence* of his time, his name, as more recently that of honest Joe Miller, was woefully abused; and all the stray jests that nobody would own, were freely fathered upon him. Soon after his death, a small volume appeared, and became popular, entitled "Merry Tales, newly Imprinted and made by Master Skelton, Poet-Laureate," "very pleasant for the recreation of the mind." The admirers of "Punch" may be entertained with a specimen of the drollery that could amuse a ruder age.

TALE I.—HOW SKELTON CAME LATE HOME TO OXFORD FROM ABINGDON.

"Skelton was an Englishman, born as Scogan was, and he was educated and brought up at Oxford; and there

was he made a poet-laureate. And on a time he had been at Abingdon to make merry, where that he had eat salt meats; and he did come late home to Oxford, and he did lie in an inn named the 'Tabard,' which is now the 'Angel,' and he did drink, and went to bed. About midnight, he was so thirsty or dry, that he was constrained to call to the tapster for drink; and the tapster heard him not. Then he cried to his host, and his hostess, and to the ostler, for drink, and no man would hear him. 'Alack!' said Skelton, 'I shall perish for lack of drink! what remedy?' At the last he did cry out, and said: 'Fire! fire! fire!' When Skelton heard every man bustled himself upward, and some of them were naked, and some were half-asleep and amazed, and Skelton did cry, 'Fire! fire!' still, that every man knew not whither to resort; Skelton did go to bed, and the host, and hostess, and the tapster with the ostler, did run to Skelton's chamber with candles lighted in their hands, saying: 'Where—where is the fire?' 'Here, here, here,' said Skelton, and pointed his finger to his mouth, saying, 'Fetch me some drink to quench the fire, and the heat and the dryness in my mouth;' and so they did. Wherefore it is good for every man to help his own self in time of need with some policy or craft, so be it there be no deceit nor falsehood used."

We conclude our quotations by an extract from a *brochure* termed "The Life of Long Meg of Westminster," detailing the first introduction of that interesting personage to our jovial laureate.

"After the carrier had set up his horse, and despatched his lading, he remembered his oath, and therefore bethought him how he might place these three maids. With that he called to mind that the mistress at the 'Eagle' in Westminster had spoken divers times to him for a servant.

He with his carriage passed over the fields to her house, where he found her sitting and drinking with a Spanish knight, called Sir James of Castille, Doctor Skelton, and Will Somers; told her how he had brought up to London three Lancashire lasses, and seeing she was oft desirous to have a maid, now she should take her choice which of them she would have. 'Marry,' quoth she, (being a very merry and a pleasant woman), 'carrier, thou comest in good time; for not only I want a maid, but here be three gentlemen that shall give me their opinions which of them I shall have.' With that the maids were bidden come in, and she entreated them to give their verdict. Straight, as soon as they saw Long Meg, they began to smile; and Doctor Skelton, in his mad, merry vein, blessing himself, began thus:

"'Domine, Domine, unde hoc?
What is she in the gray cassock?
Methinks she is of a large length,
Of a tall pitch and a good strength,
With strong arms, and stiff bones;
This is a wench for the nones.
Her looks are bonny and blithe,
She seems neither lither nor lithe,
But young of age,
And of a merry visage,
Neither beastly nor bowsy,
Sleepy nor drowsy,
But fair-faced, and of a good size;
Therefore, hostess, if you be wise,
Once be ruled by me;
Take this wench to thee,
For this is plain,
She'll do more work than these twain.
I tell thee, hostess, I do not mock,
Take her in the gray cassock.'

"'What is your opinion?' quoth the hostess to Sir James of Castille. 'Question with her,' quoth he, 'what she can do, and then I'll give you mine opinion. And yet first, hostess, ask Will Somers' opinion.' Will smiled, and swore that his hostess should not

have her, but King Harry should buy her. 'Why so, Will?' quoth Doctor Skelton. 'Because,' quoth Will Somers, 'that she shall be kept for breed; for if the King would marry her to long Sanders, of the Court, they would bring forth none but soldiers.' Well, the hostess demanded what her name was? 'Margaret, forsooth,' quoth she. 'And what work can you do?' 'Faith, little, mistress,' quoth she, 'but handy labour, as to wash and wring, to make clean a house, to brew, bake, or any such drudgery; for my needle, to that I have been little used to.' 'Thou art,' quoth the hostess, 'a good lusty wench, and therefore I like thee the better. I have here a great charge, for I keep a victualling-house, and divers times there come in swaggering fellows that, when they have eat and drunk, will not pay what they call for; yet, if thou take the charge of my drink, I must be answered out of your wages.' 'Content, mistress,' quoth she; 'for while I serve you, if any stale cutter* comes in and thinks to pay the shot with swearing, hey, Gog's wounds! let me alone! I'll not only (if his clothes be worth it) make him pay ere he pass, but lend him as many bats as his crag will carry, and then throw him out of doors.' At this they all smiled. 'Nay, mistress,' quoth the carrier, ''tis true; for my poor pilch† here is able, with a pair of blue shoulders, to swear as much!' and with that he told them how she had used him at her coming to London. 'I cannot think,' quoth Sir James of Castille, 'that she is so strong.' 'Try her,' quoth Skelton; 'for I have heard that Spaniards are of wonderful strength.' Sir James, in a bravery, would needs make experience, and therefore asked the maid if she durst change a box on the ear with him? 'I, Sir,' quoth she, 'that I dare, if my mistress will give me leave.'

* A cant word for swaggerer or bully.

† A carman's leather coat.

'Yes, Meg,' quoth she, 'do thy best!' and with that it was a question who should stand first. 'Marry, that I will, Sir,' quoth she, and so stood to abide Sir James's blow, who, forcing himself with all his might, gave her such a box that she could scarcely stand. Yet she stirred no more than a post. Then Sir James he stood, and the hostess willed her not to spare her strength. 'No,' quoth Skelton; 'and if she fell him down, I'll give her a pair of new hose and shoes.' 'Mistress,' quoth Meg (and with that she strook up her sleeve), 'here is a foul fist, and it hath past much drudgery, but, trust me, I think it will give a good blow!' and with that she raught at him so strongly, that down fell Sir James at her feet. 'By my faith,' quoth Will Somers, 'she strikes a blow like an ox, for she hath struck down an ass.' At this they all laughed, Sir James was ashamed, and Meg was entertained into service."

We have ventured, in our extracts, to modernise the spelling, for the greater convenience of those readers who may not be familiar with our older authors.

Edmund Spenser was born in London about the year 1553, in East Smithfield, near the Tower, if we may trust the uncertain whisper of tradition. He was descended from the stock of the Spensers, afterwards Spencers of Hurstwood, near Burnley, in Lancashire, his own branch being probably seated on a small estate still called Spencers, situated at Filley Close, in the forest of Pendle, at the foot of Pendle Hill. The direct ancestor of the poet, Adam le Spenser, held lands of King Edward II., by military tenure, in the township of Worsthorne, a few miles from Spencers; and though the branch to which he belonged had sunk into obscurity, the remote connection was acknowledged by the Spencers of Althorpe, afterwards distinguished by the trophies and dukedom of Marlborough.

Spenser was sent to Cambridge, and entered at Pembroke Hall as a sizar, 20th of May, 1569. He there contracted a friendship with Gabriel Harvey, of Christ's College, or, according to another account, of Pembroke Hall, afterwards fellow of Trinity Hall, who, like himself, was in reduced circumstances, with powerful connections, and became afterwards eminent as a poet and scholar. This friendship endured through life, and Harvey figures as Hobbinol in his friend's "Eclogues."

Spenser is recorded to have taken his B.A. degree in January, 1573, and his M.A. in June, 1576, and he then finally quitted the University. There is some obscurity hanging over this part of his career, but the prevailing impression is that he left in chagrin, being disappointed in his expectations of a fellowship. This probably prevented him from taking orders. He always remembered the University with gratitude, and frequently mentions it with honour; but it is a singular fact that Pembroke Hall is never once referred to through the voluminous range of his compositions, strewed as they are with allusions to his personal history.

On retiring from the University, he went to live with his relatives in the north of England. Here the sensitive poet fell a victim to the arts of a country girl, whom he has immortalised under the name of Rosalind, but whose actual name is still a mystery. An ingenious writer has attempted a solution by resolving the anagram into "Rose Linde," averring that "Linde" is a common surname in Kent, and "Rose" a frequent feminine appellation everywhere. He himself calls her "the widow's daughter of the glen," and writes as though she were of low degree, though in the gloss on the poems, written, probably, by Harvey, we are told she was of gentle blood. The wily maid encouraged his advances, and then left him, to give her hand to another. The heart-broken poet turned the

incident to account in some plaintive pastorals; and, under the name of Menalcas, took satisfactory vengeance on his rival in the shape of satire.

To relieve his despondency, or perhaps to dissipate his idleness, Harvey urged him to remove to London, and obtained his introduction to Sir Philip Sydney. Sydney presented him to his uncle the Earl of Leicester. He was invited to Penshurst, the princely domain of the Sydneys in Kent, where he stayed a few months, doubtless assisting his patron in his studies, and returned with him to London, as, in October, 1579, we find him writing to Harvey from Leicester House.

In 1579, Spenser, in a letter to his friend, several times alludes to his prospect of travelling abroad; and in some Latin lines enclosed, intimates that his journey may stretch, not only to the Alps and Pyrenees, but beyond, to the inhospitable Caucasus and to Babylon. This was some proposed appointment as agent for the Earl of Leicester—a project, however, which proved abortive—as, from the first, had appeared likely, and probably as the poet hoped. In the following year, Lord Grey of Wilton, was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland. This nobleman was a connection of the Earl of Leicester; and on his recommendation, took out Spenser with him as his secretary. This first offer of employment was speedily followed by a second, as in March of the following year, 1581, the poet became clerk to the Irish Court of Chancery; and in the same year the Queen conferred on him the grant of a lease of the Abbey of Iniscorthy or Enniscorthy, with the castle and manor attached, in the county of Wexford, at an annual rent of £300. 6*s.* 8*d.*, on condition of keeping the buildings in repair. This property—the estimated value of which, at the commencement of the present century, was £8,000 per annum—he conveyed, by indenture, on the 9th December, 1581, to

Richard Synot, who afterwards conveyed it to Sir Henry Wallop, the Treasurer of War in Ireland, from whom the Earls of Portsmouth descended, in which family the estate remained. From the short time Spenser retained possession of it, we may infer either that his resources were exhausted or that a residence in Ireland had no attractions for him, and that he was already meditating his departure.

In 1582, Lord Grey resigned, or was recalled, and it has been generally assumed that his secretary returned to England with him.

On the 27th June, 1586, Spenser, probably through the powerful mediation of Sir Philip Sydney, obtained from the Crown a second grant of land in Ireland. This consisted of 3,028 acres in the county of Cork, at an annual rental of £17. 7*s.* 6*d.*, forming part of the forfeited estates of the rebellious Earl of Desmond. On the 17th October of the same year, Sir Philip Sydney fell at the battle of Zutphen. Never before had the death of a subject been mourned with so universal a regret. In his lofty character we see the ideal of that age—the model of what every Englishman longed to be. Oldys says, he could muster two hundred authors who had written in praise of Sydney. It seemed as though every mean passion was disarmed by the nobleness of that rare disposition. Spenser bitterly felt the loss of his patron, and bewailed him through life. But the lassitude of grief was dispelled by the active duties of his position. By the terms of his grant, he was compelled to cultivate his land, and accordingly the poet departed to establish himself in his new domain. In the castle of Kilcolman, now a ruin, but then in tolerable repair — a seat of the Earl of Desmond—he resumed his life of meditation. His new home was delightfully situated on the margin of a fine clear lake, which stretched away to the southward, its position, about two miles west of Doneraile. It stood in

a broad plain, surrounded on all sides by mountains—by the Waterford mountains on the East, and the Nagle on the south. Northward rose the Ballyhowra Hills, or, as he termed them, "the mountains of the Mole," from which descended the stream of Awbeg or Mulla, meandering through his grounds, while, on the west, the vista was closed by the mountains of Kerry. In this retreat, he was visited by no less a person than Sir Walter Raleigh. Raleigh had been active in the suppression of the rebellion, and had been rewarded with an extensive grant of the forfeited estates. The tastes of the two neighbours were congenial, for Raleigh was a poet; and here, Spenser tells us, would he sit with his friend, the Shepherd of the Ocean, in the shade of the green alders that waved beside the stream of Mulla, listening to projects of high adventure, or wandering through Faëry Land, whose utmost romance was exceeded by the every-day wonders of that adventurous age. When the first three books of the "Faëry Queen" were completed, Raleigh urged their immediate publication, and the two friends proceeded to London together. The work was entered on the Register of the Stationers' Company 1st December, 1589, and was published probably early in January following, with the title of "The Faërie Queene, disposed in XII Bookes, fashioning XII Morall Virtues." It was dedicated to the most mighty and magnificent Empress Elizabeth; and in the second edition, containing six books, Spenser again entrusted his labours "to the Most High, Mighty, and Magnificent Empress, to live with the Eternity of her Fame." To the end of the first edition he appended a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, expounding his whole intention in the course of the work, and among other similar compliments, two copies of verses heralded in the poem, written by his distinguished friend.

He had resigned his clerkship on the 22nd June, 1588, and was appointed Clerk to the Council of Munster.

Although we have mentioned no previous publication, yet it must not be concluded that this was the first poem with which Spenser delighted his contemporaries. Our author was one of those extraordinary men who appear occasionally to prove the marvellous fecundity of the human mind. With him incessant production seemed a law of nature; composition was but the spontaneous and unlaboured flow of his ever teeming fancy; an exercise necessary to his healthy existence, and an ever originating source of solace. His earliest work was his "Shepherd's Calender," published ten years before, a series of twelve eclogues, appropriated to each month of the year, detailing the course of his hapless passion. Within the intermediate decade of years, he had written nine comedies, a composition called "The Dreams," "The Dying Pelican," "Slumber," "The Court of Cupid;" "Legends," probably afterwards worked into the "Faëry Queen," "Pageants," concerning which a like conjecture has been expressed, "Sonnets," "The Marriage Song of the Thames," Translation of Moschus's "Idyllium of Wandering Love," "The English Poet," probably a prose essay, and "Stemmata Dudleiana."

In 1591, William Ponsonby, publisher of the "Faëry Queen," brought out a volume of his minor poems. Among these were "The Ruins of Time," a poem in ninety-seven stanzas, bewailing the death of the Earl of Leicester. In this piece there are a few bitter lines, which have generally been applied to Burleigh. The occasion of the attack is contained in a story related by Fuller, which it has been the fashion of late to discredit. The recent discovery of a MS. diary of a barrister from 1601 to 1603 tends, however, to confirm the tale, which bears no internal improbability. On the presentation of some poems to the Queen, we are told that she ordered him a gift of £100.

Burleigh disliking Spenser probably on political grounds, he being protected by the party opposed to himself, observed testily, "What, all this for a song?" The Queen replied, "Then give him what is reason." Spenser waited, but no realization of the royal bounty reached him, and he embraced an opportunity of presenting her with a paper, purporting to be a petition, in which were written the following lines:

"I was promised on a time
To have reason for my rhyme;
From that time unto this season,
I have had nor rhyme nor reason."

The device was successful, as the Queen requested the immediate payment of the money.

In "The Tears of the Muses," a poem containing numerous allusions to the persons and literary history of the time, are some stanzas referring to "Our Pleasant Willy," by whom it is supposed that Shakespeare is meant. "Virgil's Gnat" is a free translation of the "Culex" attributed to that poet. "Prosopopoia, or Mother Hubberd's Tale" is a remarkable poem. Lying ill of a sickness produced by the excessive heats of Midsummer, some friends gathered round him to divert him with their stories, and among the rest a good old woman named Mother Hubberd, who related this fable of the "Fox and the Ape." In it occur those powerful lines, which springing from blighted hopes, are among the most nervous that dropped from his pen.

"So pitiful a thing is suitor's state!
Full little knowest thou that hast not tried
What hell it is in suing long to bide;
To lose good days that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers';
To have thy asking, yet wait many years;

To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs,
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone."

"The Ruins of Rome" by Bellay, are thirty-three sonnets translated from the French, of no particular merit. "Muiopotmos, or the Fate of the Butterfly," is an allegory, the drift of which at present is not very apparent. "Visions of the World's Vanity," and a few sonnets completed the list of this collection. Ponsonby, in the address to the reader prefixed to his volume, observes that finding the "Faëry Queen" had found a favourable passage among them, for the better increase and accomplishment of their delight, he had collected such small poems of the same author, as he had heard were dispersed abroad in sundry hands, and refers to other poems in addition to those enumerated as lost. Those, however, which were published, and the titles of others already recapitulated, to which frequent allusions were made in the poet's correspondence, exhibit in their amount alone a rare industry, and an unparalleled facility of composition.

We may assume—and most of the incidents in the biography of Spenser are but assumptions, gleaned from incidental notices of himself in his works—that he now remained in England for a year or two. In February, 1591, Elizabeth conferred on him a grant of £50 a-year. The discovery of this instrument in the Chapel of the Rolls has induced his biographers to class Spenser with the Poets-Laureate. He held, however, a sort of intermediate position between the old University Graduates, and the subsequent tenants of a legally constituted office. T January of the following year he published his "Daphn an elegy on the death of Mrs. Arthur Gorges, and afterwards he returned to Ireland. Though we fail to trace his proceedings from his writings, we have some

glimpse of him through the following unpoetical documents. In 1593, Maurice, Lord Roche, Viscount Fermoy, petitioned the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, objecting that "one Edmund Spenser, gentleman, hath lately exhibited suit against your suppliant for three plough lands, parcels of Shanballymore, your suppliant's inheritance, before the Vice-President of the Council of Munster, which land hath been heretofore decreed for your suppliant against the said Spenser and others, under whom he conveyed, and nevertheless for that the said Spenser being Clerk of the County in the said province, did assign his office unto one Nicholas Curteys, among other agreements with covenant, that during his life he should be free in the said office for his causes, by occasion of which immunity he doth multiply suits against your suppliant in the said province upon pretended title of others." Lord Roche presented at the same time another petition against one Callaghan, whom he therein alleges as his opponent, "by supportation and maintenance of Edmund Spenser, gentleman, a heavy adversary unto your suppliant." In a third petition the same suppliant states, "that Edmund Spenser, gentleman, hath entered into three plough-lands, parcel of Ballingerath, and disseised your suppliant thereof, and continueth by countenance and greatness the possession thereof, and maketh great waste of the wood of the said land, and converteth a great deal of corn growing thereupon to his proper use, to the damage of the complainant of £200 sterling." Whereunto we are informed by the Record in the Rolls Office, the said Edmund Spenser had several days prefixed unto him peremptorily to answer, which he neglected to do. Wherefore, after a day of grace given on the 12th February, 1594, Lord Roche was decreed his possession.

From these extracts, we may suspect that Spenser was by no means neglectful of his rights as a proprietor, or considerate of those of his neighbours. The plaintive,

even querulous complaints with which his works are studded, indicate some deficiency of moral power, and are no assurance of the writer's gentleness or sensibility. Such laments spring usually from a deep selfishness, which precludes the possibility of a keen sensitiveness to the rights of others, or a generous sympathy with suffering. Thus Spenser encroached upon his neighbours, and never made way in the affections of the surrounding poor, and his memory was long held in detestation. In life he was eminently fortunate. Starting from obscure circumstances, he gained the affection and patronage of the noblest in the land. The Queen was munificent in rewarding his merit. His works were highly popular, and he escaped all annoyance from the irritating shafts of satire, yet in one poem he terms himself "the wofullest man alive." He was always complaining and always poor. So assiduous was he in soliciting the favour of the great, as apparently to be oblivious of the obligation and dignity of self-reliance, and his comparative failure as a courtier overwhelmed him with mortification.

"Poorly, poor man, he lived, poorly, poor man, he died."

So wrote Phineas Fletcher; summing up his history in a line.

In 1595, Ponsonby published a quarto in London, containing, with other poems, "Colin Clout's come home again." Colin Clout is Spenser himself, and the poem which is dedicated to Raleigh, is most interesting as relating to contemporary circumstances and persons. Here we meet with the last allusion to his false but not yet forgotten Rosalind. In the same year appeared a small duodecimo, containing the "Amoretti," a series of eighty-eight sonnets relating the progress of a new affection, with the "Epithalamium; or, Bridal Song." After so long an interval he again had wooed, and this time with success, as he was married at Cork, June 11, 1594.

The pastoral elegy of "Astrophel," devoted to the memory of Sydney, "the pride of a proud age," was given to the world in 1595.

In 1596, Spenser returned to England with the three latter books of his "Faëry Queen, and in the course of the year the whole six were published together. The "Protholamium," and "Four Hymns," which appeared likewise in the course of the year were the last of his publications. The two additional cantos of the "Faëry Queen" were posthumous as they were first printed in the folio edition of 1609. His prose dialogue on the state of Ireland, showing enlarged political knowledge and much antiquarian learning, finished in 1596, did not see the light till thirty-four years after his death, when Sir James Ware published it at Dublin, with a dedication to the then Lord-Deputy Wentworth. Some short additional poems appeared in the collected edition of his works in 1611, and a few sonnets have been recovered by a later editor.

The poet had returned to Ireland, and on the last day of September, 1598, the Queen, not forgetful of her absent flatterer, addressed a letter to the Irish Governor, recommending Spenser to be Sheriff of Cork. In the next month broke out the rebellion of the treacherous Tyrone. Kilcolman was sacked and burned. The poet fled from his flaming home; one of his children perished amid the havoc, and with his wife and remaining two he, with difficulty, escaped to England. He did not long survive this mishap, as he died January 16, 1599, at an inn or lodging-house in King Street, Westminster.

"A damp of wonder and amazement struck
Thetis' attendants; many a heavy look
Followed sweet Spenser, till the thickening air
Sight's further passage stopped. A passionate tear
Fell from each nymph; no shepherd's cheek was dry;
A doleful dirge and mournful elegy
Flew to the shore." BROWNE'S PASTORALS.

He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and placed where he wished, by the side of his favourite Chaucer. The pall was held up by poets, who assembled round the grave, and dropped in their farewell elegies with the pens that wrote them, a touching tribute to his memory. The charges of his funeral were defrayed by the Earl of Essex, and after an interval of upwards of thirty years, his monument was erected by Anne, Countess of Dorset. This was restored and rectified as to dates in 1788 at the expense of his college at Cambridge.

Spenser was the last interpreter of those waning modes of thought, which had once exercised so powerful an influence through the wide extent of Christendom. With him the romance of the mediæval chivalry expired, and his genius availed to immortalize the splendid euthanasia.

Samuel Daniel has been termed a volunteer laureate. We know but little of his life, and principally acquire our estimate of his character from the general tenor of his writings. Through all, there runs a propriety and an unaffected simplicity, that the "well-languaged" poet cannot fail to be a favourite with all who have mused over his pages. He was born near Taunton in Somersetshire, in the year 1562, of a father "whose faculty," to use the quaint language of Fuller, "was a master of music, and his harmonious mind made an impression on his son's genius, who proved an exquisite poet. He carried in his christian and surname two holy prophets, his monitors, so to qualify his raptures, that he abhorred all prophaneness." In 1579, he was entered as a commoner at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, where he remained about three years, but left without a degree. He then resided in some capacity at Wilton, and under the patronage of the Countess of Pembroke, sister of Sir Philip Sydney, devoted himself to

the study of poetry and history. He was afterwards selected by the Countess of Cumberland to superintend the education of her daughter, the Lady Anne Clifford. This high-spirited and accomplished lady profited by his advice, and was not unmindful of his memory; and many years afterwards, when he had long been dead, but she had become the great Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery, she superintended the erection of a monument over his remains; and a likeness of the poet accompanied a full-length portrait of herself, which hung in one of her castles in Westmoreland. Daniel was fortunate in his patrons. Lord Mountjoy, afterwards Earl of Devonshire, Lucy, Countess of Bedford, and Henry Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, the friend of Essex, honoured him with their friendship, and enriched him by their munificent regard. He was fortunate likewise in his friends, among whom may be enumerated Sir Fulke Greville, Sir John Harrington, Sir Henry Spelman, Sir Robert Cotton, Cowell, Camden, Spenser, Jonson, Drayton and Browne. Great names!—but that was the heroic age of England.

The works of our author were varied but not voluminous. He wrote Masques, Tragedies, Poems and Sonnets, and a History of England, extending to the reign of Edward III. His poetical efforts are deficient in force either of imagination or passion. Their flow is temperate and equable. His aim was to please; and he seldom aspired to influence or inflame his readers. "He wrote the 'Civil Wars,' and yet had not one battle in his book," was the depreciatory observation of Ben Jonson; and from this poem, which may be regarded as his most ambitious effort, we have selected the following favourable specimen of his manner. It is taken from the third book, and depicts the captive Richard soliloquizing, on the morning of his murder in Pomfret Castle.

"The morning of that day, which was his last,
After a weary rest rising to pain,
Out at a little grate his eyes he cast
Upon those bordering hills and open plain,
And views the town, and sees how people pass'd:
Where others' liberty makes him complain
The more his own, and grieves his soul the more,
Conferring captive crowns with freedom poor.

"O, happy man, saith he, that lo I see
Grazing his cattle in those pleasant fields!
If he but knew his good (how blessed he
That feels not what affliction greatness yields!)
Other than what he is he would not be,
Nor change his state with him that sceptres wields;
Thine, thine is that true life, that is to live,
To rest secure, and not rise up to grieve.

"Thou sitt'st at home safe by thy quiet fire,
And hear'st of others' harms but feelest none,
And there thou tell'st of kings, and who aspire,
Who fall, who rise, who triumphs, who do moan;
Perhaps thou talk'st of me, and dost inquire
Of my restraint, why here I live alone,
And pitiest this my miserable fall;
For pity must have part, envy not all.

"Thrice happy you that look as from the shore,
And have no venture in the wreck you see;
No interest, no occasion to deplore
Other men's travails, while yourselves sit free.
How much doth your sweet rest make us the more
To see our misery and what we be!
Whose blinded greatness ever in turmoil,
Still seeking happy life, makes life a toil.

"Are kings that freedom give, themselves not free,
As meaner men to take what they may give?
What, are they of so fatal a degree,
That they cannot descend from that and live?
Unless they still be kings, can they not be,
Nor may they their authority survive?
Will not my yielded crown redeem my breath
Still am I fear'd? is there no way but death?"

Daniel received warm encouragement from Queen Anne, consort of James I. He was nominated Gentleman-Extraordinary, and afterwards one of the Grooms of her

Privy Chamber. It was during the leisure afforded by these offices, he composed the chief part of his history. He likewise wrote several Masques for the entertainment of the Court; but gradually declined the occupation, awed or chagrined by the superior ascendant of Ben Jonson. When in the fervour of dramatic composition, he generally withdrew to the seclusion of a garden residence he occupied in Old Street in the parish of St. Luke's, then a suburban district. Here he would remain for months together, patiently weaving his solitary task.

Ben Jonson said of him that he "was a good honest man, had no children and was no poet," poetical and connubial fecundity we presume being usually associated. His reputation, though equal to his deserts, fell far short of what he had fondly anticipated, and he at length retired altogether from public view. He returned to his native county, and occupied the intervals of studious contemplation, by the labours of his farm at Beckington, near Philips-Norton. He died October 13, 1619, and was buried in the parish church.

# BEN JONSON.

The life of Jonson has never been given to the public in the form in which it is now presented. A short, popular biography of this great dramatist, making accuracy and candour its especial aim, is a novelty in our literature. And none can sufficiently estimate the difficulty of the task save those who have looked into the diverse and scattered materials from which this personal history must be drawn.

Our labours indeed are much lightened by the work of Mr. Gifford, to whom a warm tribute is due from us for the patience with which he has investigated the subject, and the courage with which he has defended the character of the poet. His edition of Jonson's works forms an epoch in dramatic criticism, and the volume containing the memoir is such an introduction to them as, we venture to predict, will never be superseded. All former sketches of the poet's life had more or less repeated the idle and mischievous calumnies which the envy and malice of some inferior contemporary writers had invented. To sift and expose these was the arduous duty Mr. Gifford imposed

on himself, and manfully has he performed his task. But those very qualities which, in one point of view, make his work so valuable, seen in another, detract from its merits. It is as full and exhaustive an account as can be gleaned from multifarious sources—it is throughout the eloquent defence of an able advocate determined to rescue from unjust imputation a noble character; but the continuity of the narrative is broken by frequent quotations, lengthened notes, much sifting of evidence, and unsparing sarcasm on slanderers living or dead. The object of our less ambitious history is to give to the general reader, as simply and briefly as we can, such incidents in the poet's career as seem to us authentic, and such criticism on his character and writings as our knowledge of both may suggest.

Benjamin, or (as he himself abbreviated it) Ben Jonson, was born A.D. 1573. There exists some doubt about the exact place of his nativity. Fuller tells us that, "with all his industry he could not find him in his cradle, but that he could fetch him from his long coats: when a little child, he lived in Hartshorn Lane, near Charing Cross." Whether in this street or not, we cannot ascertain, but there is little doubt that he was born in Westminster, a month after the death of his father. He was of good ancestry, his grandfather having been a man of family and fortune, who resided first at Anandale in Scotland, afterwards at Carlisle, and who was in the service of Henry VIII. His son, the father of the poet, suffered in the reign of Mary, persecution for his religious opinions. His estates were confiscated, and he underwent a long imprisonment, but was liberated at the decease of the Papist Queen. As was not unlikely, his zeal was warmed by the sufferings it had provoked; for, upon his quitting prison, he at once entered holy orders, and

became, as Antony Wood assures us, "a grave minister of the Gospel."*

To school in the Church of St. Martin's in the Fields, Master Benjamin was sent, when his years were ripe enough to fit him for instruction in the first rudiments of knowledge. We know little or nothing of his boyhood and school career. If "the boy is father to the man"—we have no doubt that young Jonson learned his lessons with rapidity, entered into his games with zest, provoked occasional chastisement for insubordination, fought his battles with courage, and was a leader among his peers. What promise he gave of his future greatness, we know not; but his aptitude for learning, and a consideration for his good ancestry, raised him up a friend who generously sent him to Westminster School. The great Camden was then second master there, and although Ben Jonson reached the sixth form, over which the head master, Grant, presided, we have no mention of him in Jonson's writings; while Camden, who seems to have befriended the schoolboy, is always spoken of with affection. In an epigram, written many years after, the poet thus speaks of him:

> "Than thee the age sees not that thing more grave,
> More high, more holy, that she more would crave.
> What name, what skill, what faith hast thou in things,
> What sight in searching the most antique springs!
> What weight and what authority in thy speech!
> Men scarce can make that doubt but thou canst teach.

* Mr. Malone, Mr. Gifford, Barry Cornwall and many others have stated that Jonson's mother married Mr. Thomas Fowler, a master-bricklayer. They have all blundered more or less. Mr. Payne Collier has shown in a note, the materials of which were supplied by Mr. Peter Cunningham, that Mrs. Margaret Fowler was dead in 1595, whereas Jonson's mother was living after the production of "Eastward Hoe,"—and we agree with Mr. Collier, that "if Ben Jonson's mother married a second time we have yet to ascertain who was her second husband."

Pardon free truth, and let thy modesty,
Which conquers all, be once o'ercome by thee.
Many of thine this better could than I,
But for their powers, accept my piety."

In "The King's Entertainment," Jonson calls him "the glory and light of the kingdom," and mentions him eulogistically in "The Masque of Queens." But his most graceful tribute of gratitude to his revered teacher is the dedication of "Every Man in his Humour" to Camden, thus for ever associating with the most lasting monument of his own fame, the name of the man who had been in the morning of life his "guide, philosopher, and friend." It was first printed when he collected his works in 1616, and runs, as follows:

"To the most learned, and my most honoured friend, Master Camden, Clarencieux—

"Sir—There are no doubt a supercilious race in the world who will esteem all office done you in this kind, an injury; so solemn a vice it is with them to use the authority of their ignorance to the crying down of poetry or the professors. But my gratitude must not leave to correct their error; since I am none of those that can suffer the benefits conferred upon my youth to perish with my age. It is a frail memory that remembers but present things; and had the favour of the times so conspired with my disposition, as it could have brought forth other or better, you had had the same proportion and number of the fruits, the first. Now I pray you to accept this: such wherein neither the confession of my manners shall make you blush, nor of my studies repent you to have been the instructor; and for the profession of my thankfulness, I am sure it will, with good men, find either praise or excuse.

"Your true lover,

"Ben Jonson."

The friend who had so kindly sent him to Westminster School procured for him an exhibition at St. John's College, Cambridge, whither Jonson went in his sixteenth year. We do not know its value, but it was inadequate to his support even in an age of fewer wants and simpler habits than the present, when billiards and Newmarket were as yet no part of the University course.

He returned to his home after a stay of some months, though Fuller limits its duration to a few weeks. Numerous apocryphal stories, some of them injurious to Jonson's character, have been handed down on the subject of this interval spent at home between his leaving the University and volunteering in the army in Flanders. He appears for some time to have toiled at an humble and laborious trade, and at last to have given it up in disgust, because, as he tells us, "he could not endure the occupation of a bricklayer." We next find the scholar-artisan in arms, and daring heroic deeds. He went through one campaign in the Low Countries, and performed an exploit better fitted for description in the pages of Livy than in those of a literary biography. In the sight of both armies, he engaged in single combat with one of the enemy, slew him, stripped off his arms, and carried them away in triumph. This, at the age of eighteen, was a warlike achievement of no mean kind, and is enough to show, that whatever other faults his slanderers have attributed to him, he did not, at any rate, lack chivalrous courage.

A poet militant is not without precedent. Æschylus fought at Salamis, Horace ran away at Philippi, Jonson's immediate successor, Davenant, was knighted for his valour at the siege of Gloucester, and a later laureat, Colley Cibber, bore arms in the Revolution of 1688. If "*silent* leges *inter arma*" be true, the same remark will apply to letters. Though more congenial to his nature

than the toils of the hod and trowel, the profession he had adopted left Jonson no leisure for the enjoyment of the "calm air of delightful studies." Like Coleridge, in our own day, he soon laid aside the sword for the pen. Both felt that with this weaker instrument their mission was to be worked out.

Jonson crossed the Channel for his home, bringing with him little money, and a not much larger stock of Dutch than that with which Goldsmith contemplated teaching English at Amsterdam, and leaving behind him among his comrades in arms, a reputation for valour. He always looked back upon his military career with satisfaction, and boasted "that while he was in the profession, he did not shame it by his actions." It has been said that he now returned to Cambridge, but there is no evidence whatever of the fact. After having thrown aside the bricks and mortar in disgust, and then abandoned the army, he appears to at once have turned his attention to the stage.

The English drama, at that time, if not in its infancy, had not advanced many steps beyond the Thespian condition. Only a few good plays of Shakespeare and others had succeeded the moralities, interludes, and translations which had as yet been presented at Court, in the Inns of Law, and in the Globe Theatre, Southwark. Jonson, like Shakespeare, embraced the profession of an actor, and with as little or less success. That he totally failed, as has been asserted, seems highly improbable, for we agree with Mr. Gifford "that with the advantages of youth, person, voice, and somewhat more of literature then fell to the share of every obscure actor in a strolling company, Jonson could scarcely fail to get a service among the mimics;" and we have the testimony of the Duchess of Newcastle, whose husband was the Mæcenas of his day: "I have never heard any man read well but my husband;

and I have heard him say that he never heard any man read well but Ben Jonson." Whatever our poet's histrionic success may have been, his inventive faculties soon began to show themselves, for he was employed as an anonymous assistant to other dramatists, to help them in writing and altering plays.

His career, whether theatrical or literary, was soon interrupted by an unfortunate event. Our poet now stained himself with the blood, not of a public enemy, but of a brother actor.* This man was Gabriel Spencer; but he has been absurdly stated to have been Marlow, who was killed two years before by another hand, and in a disreputable quarrel. A dispute arose, and a challenge was received by Jonson, which he was not loath to accept. They met: Spencer using a sword ten inches longer than Jonson's, nevertheless fell by his hand. It was a painful and melancholy triumph for the victor. He had been severely wounded, and was cast into prison on a charge of murder, and, as he himself tells us, "brought near to the gallows." How long the incarceration lasted, we cannot exactly ascertain. It was very little more or less than a year; but this must have seemed a long passage in his life, to a man immured in a dungeon (and we know what prisons then were), with the blood of a fellow-creature on his conscience, and in constant expectation of public trial, and perhaps summary punishment. He has told us nothing of this gloomy period, but it is connected with an incident not unimportant. We have reason to suspect that in his solitude and suffering he received no spiritual aid or consolation from the teachers of his own Church. But

* Mr. Payne Collier, in his "Life of Shakespeare," gives the following extract from a letter of Henslowe's to Alleyne, dated Sept. 26th, 1598:— "Since you were with me, I have lost one of my company, which hurteth me greatly; that is Gabriel, for he is slain in Hoxton Fields by the hand of Benjamin Jonson, bricklayer."

that restless activity which compasses sea and land to make one proselyte, did not hesitate to avail itself of so favourable an opportunity, and he was visited by a Popish priest.

In times when we have witnessed so many perversions, especially among the class of the young and the highly educated to which our poet belonged, we can feel little surprise at his embracing a creed, whose professors had at least been guiltless of grossly neglecting him. That a youth of nineteen, who had most probably only a general knowledge of the points of difference between the rival Churches, should fall a victim to the sophistries of a skilled disputant, need not be matter of marvel: and especially when we call to mind that he was of a morbid and gloomy temperament, and lying in chains neglected and forgotten, and also remember that in those days such perversions were as common as they have been during our Tractarian movement. Jonson's own account of the matter is "that he took the priest's word for it."

Another such change of creed must be chronicled in the Lives of the Poets-Laureate: but one which, however palliated or defended, is, to speak of it in the gentlest terms, far less excusable than this. Dryden was converted, not in youth, but in mature age; not unversed in the controversy, but so skilled in it, that he wrote on both sides; not as a prisoner, when a Protestant Queen was on the throne, but free and unfettered, and to win the favour and patronage of a Papist King. And Dryden never made the atonement, which Jonson did for quitting the faith of his childhood. For he some years after gave the question a serious consideration, and returned from the bosom of that Church, by whose professors his father had been plundered and persecuted, to that one whose scriptural doctrines that father had zealously preached. No one that knows the

religious pieces of our poet, can hesitate to pronounce them to be the outpourings of devotion and penitence. However confident or haughty his bearing among his fellow-men, in the presence of his Maker he is contrite, and humbles himself in the dust. They show, if we can read an author in his works, as plainly as words can speak, that he had sincerely repented his early sins and follies, and had fully realized those simple and sublime truths, which have been in all ages the stay and comfort of the wise and the good. We make one extract, which will prove our assertion, and more than compensate our reader for the interruption of the narrative.

### TO THE HOLY TRINITY.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity
Of persons, still one God in Unity,
The faithful man's believed mystery,
Help, help to lift
Myself up to Thee, harrow'd, torn, and bruised
By sin and Satan; and my flesh misused,
As my heart lies in pieces, all confused,
O, take my gift.

All-gracious God, the sinner's sacrifice,
A broken heart, Thou wert not wont despise,
But 'bove the fat of rams or bulls to prize
An offering meet
For Thy acceptance: O, behold me right,
And take compassion on my grievous plight!
What odour can be than a heart contrite
To Thee more sweet?

Eternal Father, God, who didst create
This all of nothing, gav'st it form and fate,
And breath'st into it life and light with state
To worship Thee.
Eternal God, the Son, who not denied'st
To take our nature, becam'st man and died'st
To pay our debts upon Thy cross, and cried'st
All's done in Me.

Eternal Spirit, God from both proceeding,
Father and Son; the Comforter in breeding
Pure thoughts in man; with fiery zeal them feeding
For acts of grace.
Increase those acts, O glorious Trinity
Of persons, still one God in Unity,
Till I attain the long'd-for mystery
Of seeing your face,

Beholding one in three, and three in one,
A Trinity to shine in union;
The gladdest light dark man can think upon,
O, grant it me!
Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, you three,
All co-eternal in your majesty,
Distinct in persons, yet in unity
One God to see.

My Maker, Saviour, and my Sanctifier!
To hear, to meditate, sweeten my desire
With grace, with love, with cherishing entire
O, then how blest!
Among Thy saints elected to abide,
And with Thy angels placed side by side,
But in Thy presence, truly glorified,
Shall I then rest.

In an age when shallow and short-sighted men are seeking to import and popularize the mystic subtleties of foreign scepticism, it is refreshing to find that we can add to the names of Milton and Newton, and others of the Kings of Thought, one whose noble intellect, strengthened by learning, and matured by time, accepted with a reasonable faith and a wise humility the mysteries of our revealed religion.

Jonson's release from prison was in all probability owing to the fact of his enemies dropping the prosecution. He immediately betook himself to his former avocations; and now only in his twentieth year, with small means and dark prospects, was so bold as to enter the holy estate of matrimony. The fair object of his choice was young, and of the religion which he had adopted. If any faith can be

put in the report of his conversation with Drummond, her husband described her as somewhat shrewish, but in the more correct and classical sense in which the word was then used, an *honest* woman, of domestic habits, and courageous in struggling with the poverty and privations of their early married life. Their first child was a daughter, who lived only six months, and whose death called forth from the poet and father these pathetic lines:

"Here lies, to each her parents' ruth,
Mary, the daughter of our youth,
Yet all Heaven's gifts being Heaven's due,
It makes the father less to rue.
At six months' end she parted hence,
With safety of her innocence;
Whose soul, Heaven's Queen, whose name she bears,
In comfort of her mother's tears,
Hath placed amongst her virgin train,
Where, while that severed doth remain,
This grave partakes the fleshly birth
Which cover lightly gentle earth."

In the following year his wife bore him a son, to whom some of the players stood as sponsors, and it is said, Shakespeare among them. This was a year of pinching want and incessant toil. What his necessities at this time, were, we may to some extent judge from a memorandum of Mr. Henslowe, which records "an advance of five shillings" to him; and those who know his works, will remember that he never stooped to any of the small artifices, by which inferior writers gained a contemporary applause to be followed swiftly by an eternal oblivion; that he looked on a poet's mission as something high and holy, and has taught that we should look on poetry as a "sacred invention," and

"View her in her glorious ornaments
Attired in the majesty of art,
Set high in spirit with the precious taste
Of sweet philosophy, and, which is most,
Crown'd with the rich traditions of a soul,

That hates to have her dignity profaned
With any relish of an earthly thought."

At what precise period he produced "Every Man in his Humour," it is impossible to decide, for there is an inextricable confusion about the dates of the earlier events of his life. We have seen that in 1598, his duel with Gabriel Spencer occurred, and there is an uncontradicted tradition, that his marriage took place after the imprisonment which he suffered for killing Spencer. Many of his biographers assert that it was first played in 1596, when the Author was only in his two and twentieth year; that the characters were Italian, and the scene laid near Florence. Whether this be true or not, (and there is no authority but tradition,) it was without doubt originally acted *in the form in which it has been handed down to us*, by the Lord Chamberlain's servants in the year 1598. And, notwithstanding Mr. Gifford's statements to the contrary, it is highly probable that through Shakespeare's interposition this famous drama was accepted.

The fame which this comedy won for him brought with it that envy which ever pursues greatness as its shadow. He tells us that they began "to provoke him on every stage with their petulant styles, and as if they wished to single him out for their adversary." His career now becomes what that of too many of the *genus irritabile* has been—a strife with many of his contemporaries. He appears not only to have felt his superiority, but to have somewhat too confidently asserted it. It required even less than this to provoke a herd of assailants; and so through the remainder of his life we find him constantly lampooned, and occasionally replying to his vituperative enemies.

"He who surpasses or subdues mankind
Must look down on the hate of those below."

And would you struggle to be ranked among the great, you should be patient under the attacks of the small. We shall find that the master spirits of each age have mostly lived in friendship, and held sweet counsel together. It is among the lesser aspirants for fame that petty passions and little jealousies have broken out. The giants know their intellectual strength and stature, and reign each in his own kingdom supreme, but on terms of amity with foreign powers, while the dwarfs and pigmies, whose territories in the world of letters are small, whose boundaries uncertain and undefined, wage with each other an unceasing warfare, and only band together to attack their common superior, and therefore common foe. So, while all attempts to prove that any feud existed between the gentle Shakespeare and the learned Ben Jonson fall to the ground, there is no doubt whatever that with Dekker, Marston, Gill and others, our poet carried on endless hostilities.

It is sad that a profession which might rank so high, should enjoy so unenviable a notoriety; but true it is, that in the republic of letters the Temple of Janus is never shut. One need not indulge in visionary hopes of the perfectibility of human nature to believe that, although this state of things cannot be entirely got rid of, it will undergo and is undergoing great and rapid change for the better. Literature has escaped the degrading influences of patronage. For a book to be now successful it is no longer deemed necessary that it should have attached to it the name of an aristocrat, or be cumbered with a dedication teeming with servile if not blasphemous adulation. An author now at once addresses himself to his audience. If he can instruct or interest or amuse his fellow-men, he will not lack reward for his labours without stooping to fawn and flatter. Under such a system, there is between writers a loftier rivalry, a diviner emulation. It is not an

ignoble jostling of one another in the ante-chamber of a patrician. There are no pangs of jealousy, because Mæcenas smiled on one and passed another by unnoticed. Write what the public can read to its benefit or its pleasure, and by the sweat and labour of your brain you will earn your bread as independently as man can amid the mutual relations, "nice connections and strong dependencies" of the economy in which we live. The best will, for the most part, be the best rewarded; and though we cannot weed hate and envy from the human heart, there is an instinct in men which prompts them to acquiesce in what is fair and reasonable; and there will be less of railing and bickering when ability and exertion meet with their proportionate recompense, when success no longer depends on circumstance and accident, when a letter of introduction can no more clothe mediocrity in purple and fine linen, or the want of it leave genius in squalor and rags. Jonson's literary strifes must be again alluded to, though the quarrels of authors be neither a flattering or pleasing aspect of literary history.

He next produced "Every Man out of his Humour," which met with a favourable reception. This and all of his earliest and best productions were part of

> "Those melodious bursts which fill
> The spacious times of great Elizabeth
> With sounds that echo still."

And the Virgin Queen's honouring the performance with her presence called forth from the grateful poet the following tribute to her in the epilogue. It was spoken by Macilente, who kneels and prays:

> "Yet humble as the earth do I implore,
> O Heaven, that she, whose presence hath effected
> This change in me, may suffer most late change
> In her admired and happy government:

May still this island be called Fortunate,
And rugged treason tremble at the sound
When fame shall speak it with an emphasis.
Let foreign polity be dull as lead,
And pale Invasion come with half a heart,
When he but looks upon her blessed soil.
The throat of war be stopt within her land,
And turtle-footed peace dance fairy rings
About her court; when never may there come,
Suspect or danger, but all trust and safety.
Let flattery be dumb, and envy blind
In her dread presence; Death himself admire her,
And may her virtues make him to forget
The use of his inevitable hand.
Fly from her, Age; sleep, Time, before her throne;
Our strongest wall falls down when she is gone."

The play is dedicated to "the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom, the Inns of Court." It was played at the Globe Theatre, of which Shakespeare was then manager. He had acted in "Every Man in his Humour," but took no part in this. Jonson, with his characteristic confidence, and inability to conceal his strong self-esteem, added when he published it, this motto from Horace,

"Non aliena meo pressi pede—si propius stes
Te capient magis, et decies repitita placebunt."

His slender means do not appear to have been much bettered by his successful dramatic compositions, for in Henslowe's Memorandum Book, Mr. Gifford finds *forty shillings* advanced to Dekker and Johnson for a play they were together writing, *twenty* to Chettle and himself for another, and *twenty* on a tragedy upon which he was solely employed. His next production was "Cynthia's Revels." This was aimed at some fashionable follies. It is dedicated to "the special fountain of manners, the Court." This quaint but beautiful piece of English, however, contains what we would fain construe as anything rather

than a reflection on the memory of the monarch whom in our last quotation he had so enthusiastically eulogized; but the reader may judge for himself. "Such shalt thou find some here, even in the reign of Cynthia, a Crites and an Arete. Now under thy Phœbus (James I.) it will be thy province to make more." It was played by the children of the Queen's Chapel at first—a private representation—but afterwards brought before the town, and it was revived after the Restoration. It was directed against the fantastic fopperies of the courtiers, and the tiresome pedantry of the Euphuists. It is strange that while it did not incense the parties attacked, it stirred up a swarm of small poets and critics, and Marston and Dekker thought themselves represented under the names of Hedon and Anaides. Jonson replied to their caballings in "The Poetaster," where he introduces them plainly enough as Crispinus and Demetrius. It is dedicated to Mr. Richard Martin, then Recorder of London, an eloquent man, and one of the most convival of the wits who drank at the same board with Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Jonson. "The Poetaster" was written in fifteen weeks, which fact invalidates the oft-repeated averment that our poet was slow in composition. He appended to it a translation of Horace's, Sat. I., lib. II., dialogue between himself and Trebatius, and added one in which Polyposus and Nasutus are the chief speakers, in which he vindicates his character against his accusers. It concludes with a fine burst of indignant sarcasm.

"Once I'll say,
To strike the ear of time in those proud strains,
As shall beside the cunning of their ground
Give cause to some of wonder, some despite,
And more despair to imitate their sound.
I that spend half my nights and all my days
Here in a cell to get a dark pale face,
To come forth worth the ivy and the bays,
And in this age can hope no other grace.

Leave me! There's something come into my thought
That must and shall be sung high and aloof
Safe from the wolf's black jaw and the dull ass's hoof."

The higher effect of his muse to which Jonson evidently here alludes was tragedy. Accordingly in 1603, he produced "Sejanus," of which play we must make some special mention hereafter. It met with much opposition, was withdrawn, and afterwards remodelled. During the next few years, little is known of his literary labours, but he seems to have written for the stage in conjunction with some of his contemporaries, and his worldly affairs wore a sunnier aspect. Whatever his occasional inability to suit the tastes of theatrical audiences, he was winning golden opinions from the most eminent men of the day, and enjoying their love and friendship. His just reputation for great learning which frequently induced the spectators and critics to receive with apathy, if not displeasure, the works of one who they imagined was more bent on instructing than entertaining them, gained for him among the judicious a high esteem.

At the "Mermaid Tavern," in Friday Street, a club had been founded by no less a man than Sir Walter Raleigh, and here were wont to meet together the master spirits of the age. Here Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Selden, Cotton, Martin and Donne, indulged convivial wit, and joined in intellectual discourse. Like the Roman Senate it was an assembly of kings. And with his knowledge and humour, and critical acumen, not the least star in that resplendent galaxy was the learned Ben Jonson.

It was at this time, too, that he paid several visits to the country-houses of the aristocracy. If we may trust Drummond, as early as 1603 our poet was on a visit to Sir Robert Cotton, and Camden, his old master, was his fellow-guest.

At this time the plague was raging in London. Jonson had left his family behind him. His thoughts were doubtless much occupied on them. One night he dreamed that his eldest boy, then seven years of age, appeared to him with a bloody cross (the plague spot) on his forehead, "that he appeared of a manly stature, and of such growth as he thought he would be at the resurrection." This alarmed Jonson. He communicated his fears to Camden, and it is strange that on the very next day came from his wife the sad tidings that his little son was dead. He has dedicated some lines to his memory, which though as good as many such elegies are, do not deserve such a rank in the Poetry of Sorrow as those on his daughter already quoted.

His talents also in the new reign gained for him the favour of the Court. Elizabeth, though she had not failed to appreciate his abilities, doled out but a niggard patronage to the professors of the humane arts. James himself an author, and desirous of a reputation for even more learning than he really possessed, readily and freely encouraged men of intellect. Jonson was so unfortunate as soon to provoke the displeasure of the monarch. The act, however indiscreet, redounds to his credit in more than one particular. He wrote in conjunction with Chapman and Marston, a comedy called "Eastward Hoe." In this play some sarcasms were aimed at the Scotch, who were enjoying in this reign a larger share of office and privileges than seemed fit in the eyes of Englishmen, even when a Scot was on the throne. However popular this comedy was, as might be expected, among his own countrymen, it incensed some Scotch courtiers, and on a representation being made to James, he issued an order for the immediate arrest of the offending authors. Chapman and Marston were apprehended, while Jonson remained unmolested. With a magnanimity which has been seldom

mentioned with eulogy, he voluntarily accompanied his brother poets to prison, where he remained until the kind offices of Camden and Selden secured the release of all. A report had been circulated that the comic triumvirate were to suffer a degrading punishment not uncommon in those ruder and fiercer times. It was merely this: Their ears were to be cropped and their noses slit. Escape from the threatened mutilation was fitting cause of ovation.

Jonson gave an entertainment to celebrate their deliverance, and to receive the congratulations of friends on the unscathed integrity of their features. Camden and Selden, who had saved the faces of Jonson and his brother bards, graced the banquet with their presence. An anecdote in connection with this, told of his mother, shows that that lady had in her character a tinge of romance, and something of Spartan heroism. She sat at the table with her son's guests, pledged him in a goblet of wine, and showed him a paper "of strong and lusty poison," which, had the expected sentence been pronounced, she designed to have mingled with his drink, and to have partaken of herself.

After his release from this second incarceration, he produced "The Masque of Blackness," written for some court festivities, but not as has been wilfully asserted, full of fulsome adulation to the King. He was also at this time employed upon his translation of Horace, and his version of Aristotle's "Poetics." The latter perished in the fire, which destroyed so many of his manuscripts, and which he has commemorated by his poem "The Execration of Vulcan."

In 1605, he gave to the world the comedy which ranks next in merit to "Every Man in his Humour." "Volpone; or, The Fox" was received with great applause. It is dedicated to the Universities in a long and eloquent

defence of his character and literary career. He added a smart and amusing prologue. It was at this time that Jonson gave that serious consideration to the controversy between the rival churches, which induced him to return to the faith of his childhood. We need not pause to eulogize the wisdom of the act; and the sincerity no one who knows anything of his life and writings will be so bold as to impugn. It is said that when he first, after his return to the bosom of the Anglican Church, attended the Holy Communion, he drank off the whole cup of sacramental wine. If this be true, it might seem to us an act of daring irreverence. It would perhaps be more philosophical to consider it as displaying a strange exuberance of religious zeal and rude sincerity, for in those days, as Mr. Gifford remarks, the consecrated elements were more largely partaken of than they are now, and not without scriptural and apostolical authority.

Jonson was now rising fast in public estimation. He again basked in the sunshine of Court favour, had won the applause of the universities, and fixed by the strong spell of his genius the admiration of the fickle and fastidious votaries of the drama. No festival was deemed complete if his Muse omitted to aid by her grace and ornament the ceremony or the banquet. The King was about to dine with the Worshipful Company of Merchant Tailors. Mr. Gifford quotes from Stow the following: "Whereas the company are informed that the King's most excellent majestie, with our gratious Queene, and the noble Prince and divers honorable lords and others, determyne to dyne on the day of the eleccion of M. and Wardens, therefore the meeting was appointed to advise and consult how everie thinge may be performed for the reputacion and credit of the company, to his Majestie's best lyking and contentment. And Sir John Swynnerton (afterward Lord Mayor) is entreated to confer with Master Benjamin

Jonson, the poet, about a speech to be made to welcome his Majesty, and about music and other invencions which may give liking and delight; by reason that the company doubt that their schoolmaster and scholleres be not acquainted with such kinde of entertainment." For this and other labours of the kind, Jonson received a pecuniary remuneration.

In 1609, he produced "The Silent Woman," and "The Masque of Queens." In the next year his brain was equally prolific, for that is the date of "The Masque of Barriers," and also "The Alchymist."

"Catiline" followed in 1611. This play, though not at first very successful, retained its place as a stock piece, until the Puritan, in the day of his power, banished the drama from the "kingdom of the saints," and closed the theatres where the lofty teachings of Shakespeare and Jonson had humanized and exalted their fellow-men. Next year an event occurred which threw a gloom over the Court and the nation. Prince Henry, eldest son of James I., died suddenly at the tender age of eighteen. His personal beauty, unblameable life, and engaging manners had won for him the admiration and affection of all. Men who hated the father, looked forward with pride and pleasure to the accession of the son. The sorrow which his death occasioned was not disproportionate to the popularity he had enjoyed through life.

> "Hark! forth from the abyss a voice proceeds,
> A long, low, distant murmur of dread sound
> Such as arises when a nation bleeds
> With some deep and immedicable wound."

It is perhaps a trite observation here to remark by how slender a thread does the sword of destiny seem to be suspended. On some casualty—how seemingly insignificant, on one life—alas! how uncertain! hang eventful

consequences, whose momentous importance it were impossible to exaggerate. And, albeit it should provoke the sneer of the optimist and the fatalist, to consider that the current of events might have run in another channel than that in which it shaped its way, it is difficult to escape the reflection how different might have been the history of the last two centuries, how different too the present condition of this country and the phases of its civilization, had Henry and not Charles Stuart ascended the throne of England. Then might the page that proudly records our progress have been unstained by the blood of an erring but unfortunate monarch; civil war, and restoration, and revolution might never have added their strange and swift vicissitudes to the catalogue of our crimes and follies; and our literature and our drama had perhaps retained something more of the noble grandeur of the Elizabethan age, and escaped the debasing pollution of the licence which followed unnatural and hypocritical restraint. And now, perchance, our national church—her cathedrals undesecrated by the sacrilegious hand of the Iconoclast, and her sacred spires studding at intervals more frequent our beautiful landscapes—might feed with spiritual and intellectual food the hungering millions of our dense population, neither needing the aid or experiencing the opposition of those sects and "subdichotomies of schisms,"* whose strifes and passions cannot but remind us of the too fiery zeal and too intemperate hate with which their stern forefathers rose up to defend, against kingcraft and priestcraft, the cause of conscience and of freedom.

But so it seemed not good to Him whose will it ofttimes is that nations, as well as individuals, should learn in the school of suffering.

With the exception of the case of the beloved Princess

* Milton.

Charlotte, a royal death has seldom wrung so sincere a sorrow from the heart of a people as did the premature fate of this best scion of the doomed House of Stuart.

Much as the Court might need such pastime to dissipate the cloud of gloom which hung over it, they would not insult the memory of so lamented a Prince by even the innocent recreation of masque or revelry.

Jonson, doubtless, very deeply felt a loss, which he has commemorated in his poems. He had frequented the Court much of late, and in one of his masques, had paid a loyal tribute of admiration to Prince Henry. He now embraced this opportunity, when there would naturally be but little demand on his time and talents, for European travel. Slow as communication was in those days, and great as the obstacles in the way of travelling then were, Jonson was too well known in his own country not to have gained something like a continental reputation. Ambassadors who visited our Court may have met him there, and carried back some record of the national entertainments, adorned if not created by the genius of the Laureate. Whether he was actuated by a desire to pay homage to, and receive it from, the great men of other countries, or whether he was anxious to visit the scenes of his early campaign, we know not. None of the interest that attaches itself to the travels of other poets, belongs to those of the subject of our memoir. We have no record that, like Milton, he visited Galileo in a dungeon for thinking as Franciscan licensers did not think, or that like Byron, he was wont, in the soft and sunny south—

> "To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair."

He was in Paris in 1613, and in the next year we

find him again in England, as diligent as ever with his pen. He now wrote "Bartholomew Fair," and not long after a play, with the singular title of "The Devil's an Ass." He next revised and commenced a regular publication of his works in folio. The first volume contained his Epigrams and several poems, called "The Forest," with some of his Masques and his early Plays. He was not, however, sufficiently encouraged by his contemporaries to proceed with his task, for had he done so, we should have now possessed many valuable productions of his, of which only fragments have been preserved from the fire, to which we have before alluded.

Just about this time died William Shakespeare. It is not for us to venture a tribute of weak and insufficient praise to that myriad-minded, God-like man, whose genius has enriched the thought of the world, and whom, in the words of Hallam, we may call "the greatest being Nature ever produced in the human shape;" but we rejoice to be able to record, in spite of malicious assertions to the contrary, that Jonson admired him and loved him while he lived, and loved and praised him when he died. His lines "To the Memory of my beloved William Shakespeare," are too well known to be quoted.

Daniel, as has been elsewhere said, had been, up to this time, the Court poet. There was no salary attached to the office, and its rewards were merely such favours and gratuities as the poet might be so fortunate as to gain by his writings, or by ingratiating himself with royalty or noble courtiers. James, however, now gave to Jonson the letters patent, from which we date the commencement of the present laureate dynasty, with an annual pension of one hundred marks for life. Daniel grew jealous at this, and at once quitted the Court in disgust. He lived about three years longer; and although self-exiled from the Court, died generally beloved and lamented. Though

Jonson was the fortunate occupant of a post which Daniel thought he had a prior right to, no breach occurred in the friendship which had long existed between them.

Jonson's continental wanderings had increased his love of travel. In 1618, he started on a tour to Scotland. In these days, when we are whirled from London to Edinburgh between the morning and evening meal, it is strange to think of our poet's walking the whole way from the one capital to the other. Jonson wrote an account of this pedestrian excursion and stay in the north, but unfortunately it perished in the fire at his house. In its absence, little more is known than that he spent several months at the seats of the nobility and gentry in the vicinage of the modern Athens. At Leith, he encountered Taylor, the water poet, who alludes to the meeting, and makes grateful mention of the generosity of Jonson, who gave him, at parting, "a piece of gold, two-and-twenty shillings value, to drink his health in England." In the spring he proceeded to Hawthornden, where he passed the greater part of April with another brother bard, Drummond.

To Jonson's reputation, this visit was fraught with injury, perhaps never wholly to be erased. His host had a tendency to what has been well called "Boswellism;" but it unfortunately lacked two important features in that amiable weakness, accuracy and kind feeling. He had some appreciation of the great capacities of his guest, but was not devoid of jealousy and envy. From the brief, blundering account which he gives of Jonson's conversations with him, a candid critic would gather, had he no other proofs to aid him in the conclusion, that the Laureate possessed varied and profound information on most subjects, was a severe censor of books and men, had wit to

overflowing, but with a self-esteem and self-confidence almost arrogant. But these notes of the fireside dialogues of the two poets have been made the foundation of the innumerable calumnies which, with the notorious vitality of error, have been copied, page after page, into our literary and dramatic annals.

Those who are curious on a matter which would be to the general reader wearisome should consult Mr. Gifford's memoir, the pages of which, though we have praised their candour and courage, sometimes degenerate into something less like a biography than the speech of a counsel for the defence in a criminal court, whose duties to his client may demand of him that he shall assail unsparingly the testimony and characters of witnesses for the prosecution.

Jonson appears to have been as free from suspicion as he was superior to many other evil tempers which have been laid at his door. On his return, he wrote to Drummond the following letter:—

"To my worthy, honoured, and beloved friend, W. Drummond.

"Most loving and beloved Sir, against which titles I should most knowingly offend if I made you not some account of myself, to come even with your friendship. I am arrived safely, with a most Catholic welcome, and my reports not unacceptable to his Majesty. He professed, thank God! some joy to see me, and is pleased to hear the purpose of my book, to which I most earnestly solicit you for your promise of the inscription at Pinky, some things concerning the Loch of Lomond, touching the government of Edinburgh, to urge Mr. James Scot, and what else you can procure for me, with all speed. Though these requests be full of trouble, I hope they

shall neither burthen nor weary such a friendship, whose commands to me I will ever interpret a pleasure. News we have none here, but what is making against the Queen's funeral, whereof I have something in hand which shall look upon you with the next. Salute the beloved Fentons, the Nisbets, the Scots, the Levingtons, and all the honest and honoured names with you, especially Mr. James Wroth, his wife, your sister, &c.; and if you forget yourself, you believe not in

"Your most true friend and lover,

"BEN JONSON."

Jonson was now in the zenith of his fame. The Universities, however slow sometimes to discover abilities in their own alumni, are never tardy in offering a tribute to parts which have already commanded the admiration of the world. Oxford now delighted to honour him, and he received from that learned body the honorary degree of Master of Arts. The King was also desirous of giving him an honour which, whatever its conventional value in other reigns, had been so lavished by James as to fall in public estimation, and Jonson respectfully declined knighthood which the monarch had conferred on *only* two hundred and thirty-seven persons within six weeks after his entrance into the kingdom.

The noontide of Jonson's career was as brief as it was bright. From the moment his sun of life had reached its meridian, it hastened in cloud to its setting. From 1616 to 1625, he had never written for the stage. His annual pension, his constant remuneration from the Court, and some of the civic companies had kept him from want, and had tempted him to an expenditure which utterly precluded all providence for the future. He indulged in a lavish hospitality, assembled at his table the first men of the day; and on every occasion his genuine love of conviviality

led him, whether at the "Mermaid" or in his own house, to warm his naturally sluggish and saturnine temperament with wine.

He soon suffered from a severe attack of palsy, which shook his constitution to its centre. Disease was aggravated by the want which soon followed with swift retribution on his former profuseness. He now was again compelled by his necessities to betake himself to the stage. He produced "The New Inn," a play which, albeit some passages of great merit, scarcely deserved a better fate than it met with. There is little doubt that it was "completely damned." "The just indignation the author took at the vulgar censure of his play, by some malicious spectators, begat the following ode to himself." This is Jonson's heading to it. We quote it almost entire.

"Come, leave the loathed stage,
And the more loathsome age,
Where pride and impudence, in faction knit,
Usurp the chair of wit,
Indicting and arraigning every day
Something they call a play.
Let their fastidious, vain
Commission of the brain
Run on, and rage, sweat, censure and condemn,
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

"Say that thou pour'st them wheat,
And they will acorns eat;
'Twere simple fury still thyself to waste
On such as have no taste!
To offer them a surfeit of pure bread
Whose appetites are dead!
No, give them grains their fill,
Husks, draff to drink and swill:
If they love lees, and leave the lusty wine,
Envy them not; their palate's with the swine.

* * * * *

"Leave things so prostitute,
And take the Alcaic lute,
Or thine own Horace, or Anacreon's lyre,

And though thy nerves be shrunk, and blood be cold,
Ere years have made thee old,
Strike that disdainful heat
Throughout to their defeat,
As curious fools, and envious of thy strain,
May blushing swear no palsy's in thy brain."

* * * * * *

It was very cleverly parodied by Owen Feltham, and there is a spirited answer in imitation of it as eulogistic as the parody is severe. The play was, it is said, hissed off the stage before it had reached the last act; but Jonson immediately published it as an appeal from the audience of the theatre to his readers and patrons. An allusion in the epilogue to his want and illness, called forth from Charles I. a present of one hundred pounds. Jonson was truly obliged by so munificent a succour, and poured forth his gratitude in three poems. He also made it an occasion for petitioning the King to increase the annual pension granted him by James I. Such a begging letter in rhyme is perhaps a literary curiosity. The merit of the verse would not induce us to quote it.

"The humble petition of poor Ben
To the best of monarchs, masters, men,
Doth most humbly show it
To your Majesty, your poet;
That whereas your royal father
James the blessed, pleased the rather
Of his special grace to letters
To make all the Muses debtors
To his bounty, by extension
Of a free poetic pension,
A large hundred marks annuity
To be given me in gratuity.

* * * * *

Please, your Majesty, to make,
Of your grace, for goodness sake,
Those your father's marks your pounds."

Charles immediately granted the request, and added to it a tierce of Jonson's favourite wine. The letters patent

were made out. They gave to the Poet-Laureate the annual pension of one hundred pounds and "a terse of Canary Spanish wine," "in consideration of the good and acceptable service done unto us and our said father by the said Benjamin Jonson, and especially to encourage him to proceede in these services of his wit and his penn which we have enjoined unto him, and which we expect from him."

In 1627 he had written "The Fortunate Isles." For the next three years no masque had been represented at Court. The date of the letters patent is 1630, and Charles immediately on the augmentation of his pension called on him to prepare one. Jonson wrote "Love's Triumph through Callipolis." It was highly esteemed and well received. He shortly after produced, with the assistance of Inigo Jones, "Chloridia." This was printed, and in the title-page Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones were said to be the inventors. According to a quotation of I. D'Israeli's, again quoted by Mr. Gifford, it appeared that the architect was incensed at the poet's name appearing first in the title-page. He seems to have had great influence at Court, and to have been so malevolent as to have used it to injure Jonson; for the next year the Court Masque was penned, not by our poet, but by Aurelian Townsend. Just at this time also he suffered neglect from the city authorities, from whom he had for some time received an annual bounty, and who now deprived him of what he calls their "chanderley pension." He was reduced to great want, and wrote to the Earl of Newcastle the first of what have been termed his "mendicant letters:"

"My noblest Lord and Patron,

"I send no borrowing epistle to provoke your Lordship, for I have neither fortune to repay, nor security to engage that will be taken; but I make a most humble petition to

your Lordship's bounty to succour my present necessities this good time of Easter, and it shall conclude all begging requests hereafter, on behalf of your truest beadsman and most thankful servant,

"B. J."*

This appeal was liberally responded to.

We know now but little more of him and that little is sad. The latter portion of his life is as free from incident as it was full of suffering. His whole career, save the few points in his earlier days, which we have attempted to seize on, is much like the toilsome and monotonous existence of the workers of the pen. They do not attract applause on the high places of the world. Their pains and troubles are in the smaller sphere of the library and the study. It is there that, unseen by their fellow-men, they are torn by the intellectual agony in the struggle for subsistence or the pursuit of fame. We must read them in their works, and think of the thousands of hours of careful study and patient thought in which those stately volumes were elaborated which have outlived envy and anger, and taken their place in the literature of England. And viewed in this light, even if it lack event and excitement, Jonson's life is not devoid of noble moral, and heroic example. For it was one long, honest, patient labour, to earn the bread of independence by the sweat of his brain, and to win the applause of the good and great of his own and of all time.

In his career, undiversified though it be, he was ever toiling; he came frequently before the public, had his brilliant successes and signal failures, encountered fierce assaults from envious enemies, and was cheered by warm tributes of admiration from friends, was driven by a too lavish expenditure and a too munificent hospitality into dependence upon the rich and great, and ended his days in

* Harl. MSS.

that gloom which has so often darkened the sun of genius in its setting. Had he died much younger, he had lived long enough for fame; and we may apply to him some of his own beautiful lines to the memory of Sir H. Morrison:

"It is not growing like a tree
In bulke, doth make man better be,
Or standing like an oake three thousand yeare,
To fall a logge at last, dry, bald and seare;
A lilie of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flowre of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see
And in short measure life may perfect be."

Dryden has called his last plays his dotages, and the sarcasm is perhaps as true as it is severe. Among them were "The Magnetic Lady," and "The Tale of a Tub," the last work that he submitted to the stage. It should be remembered, however, that, in contrast to these, he in his later days penned "Love's Welcome at Welbeck," which was represented when his friend and patron, the Earl of Newcastle, entertained Charles I.

In "The Sad Shepherd," too, all his pristine powers seemed for a time to have revived. In this beautiful swan-song there is a classic elegance, and a sweet pastoral simplicity which is entrancing. The verse is music itself. There are lines which combine the stately majesty of Keats' "Hyperion" with the faultless melody of the "Ænone" of Tennyson. This was Jonson's last effort, except a fragment of a tragedy entitled "The Fall of Mortimer." He was employed, too, even when the pen shook in his palsied hand, on the "Discoveries" and "Grammar," of which only fragments have reached us.

On the 6th of August, 1637, he closed his eyes on this world. He had outlived by many years his wife and all his children. No tender offices of family affection soothed

the lone old man upon his dying pillow. He was constantly visited by Dr. Duppa, Bishop of Winchester; and as we have before expressed our belief in the sincerity of his religious convictions, we may add as a farther proof of it, that he expressed on his death-bed deep penitence for the oaths and irreverent expressions which, according to the manners of his times, he had introduced into his dramatic writings.

Three days after his decease, he was buried in Westminster Abbey. Near the scene of his boyish sports, hard by the school-room where so many years ago he had listened to the words of Camden, he came home to his last long rest. In those holy aisles where sleep so many of the wits and the worthies of England, lie the ashes of one who was both. There may we read the simple epitaph that marks the spot—" O rare Ben Jonson !"

Malicious dulness has arraigned this short epiphonema as blasphemous. Such a charge is little worthy of remembrance except to show the malignity with which our poet, whether living or dead, was assailed. An anecdote is told of the origin of the laconic inscription. Sir J. Young, of Great Milton, Oxfordshire, was passing through the Abbey, and stopped and gave one of the workmen eighteen-pence to carve the words on the stone. A subscription for a monument was immediately set on foot, and was very successful; but the dark days of civil discord were close at hand, and the tomb of a poet who had adorned the courts of three English Sovereigns by his genius, was forgotten amid the gathering murmurs of the storm which shook down throne and temple.

Jonson's personal appearances were singular, and in youth prepossessing. His intense application, sedentary habits, and convivial tastes, afterwards impaired his good looks. His " dark pale face" was affected by a scorbutic humour, and he became large and corpulent. Dekker has represented

him as a monster in "Satiro-mastix;" but taking Jonson's own account of himself, we know that he had a "mountain-belly and ungracious gait." Mr. D'Israeli has called him an elephant Cupid. His love of the wine of the name gained for him the facetious nickname of the Canary Bird. His character we have so endeavoured to shadow forth in our narrative, that we have but little more to say. No man has perhaps ever provoked so much acrimonious attack and malevolent calumny as did Jonson. Now this arose from two faults not very uncommon in men of his splendid abilities. He had an overweening self-confidence, and was yet morbidly sensitive to attack from the meanest assailant. He was not content with taking that high place to which his abilities entitled him, but assumed an air of superiority which did not fail to give offence. His too great readiness to exaggerate the malice of his enemies, and meet their opprobrious assaults, perpetuated controversies which had otherwise been long forgotten. The quarrels have been handed down, and the Lilliputians of later days have come to the aid of the pigmies of Jonson's time, and done their little all to bespatter the character of the Giant. Hence have been repeated, until we are wearied and disgusted by them, those false and ill-natured scandals which disgrace well-nigh all our literary and dramatic records.

It may be objected, "Can a man be good or worthy of our love who thus continually provokes assault?" Let us remember the orator who trembled lest he had said something wrong when the crowd applauded. To win golden opinions from all sorts of men is rather the proof of successful talent than of moral worth. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," were the words of Him who "spake as never man spake" to His chosen band of followers.

Without attempting to show that Jonson was a martyr in so holy a cause as this, it may be said of him that he

was one of a small class which we find sometimes in history, and which we occasionally see among contemporaries, who, while they merit and enjoy the strong love of friends and family, are, if not generally unpopular, frequently involved in controversy and quarrel. They are not good, easy men—they have no hypocritical reticence, no diplomatic dissembling, no tender compassion for vices and follies. When anything that is wrong or mean offends their moral sense, they use hard names unsparingly; and when themselves assailed, they are not content to diminish or destroy opposition by the silent eloquence of an honourable career, but they strive to write it down and talk it down as well. Such was Ben Jonson. It may be enough to say of him that, whatever his faults and weaknesses, he lived on terms of intimacy and affection with the best and greatest men of his day; that there are numerous testimonies to his worth as a man, and his ability and wit as a conversationalist; that his letters breathe a spirit of good feeling and kindness; that, to sum up his character, he was, in the highest sense of the words, laborious, brave, and noble.

He has been compared to many great men—to Shakespeare, to Milton, and others. As no two cases are exactly alike, and no two faces possess the same expression, so such comparisons are usually unsatisfactory, if not false and fruitless. But we cannot pass by a parallel not suggested, but yet rendered stranger by the identity of name between the Poet-Laureate and our great Lexicographer. Both were hard-working, strong-minded men, who, by dint of incessant exertion, merited an immortal fame. Both, in parts of their life, endured neglect and want; both died, and left no children to perpetuate a name they had made honourable; both found a home in clubs and coffee-houses in the society of intellectual friends; both were self-confident and self-opinionated, full of

strong prejudices, supporters of the existing order of things, stern censors, critics candid to a fault, great conversationalists and brilliant wits; in their religious views sincere, but gloomy, if not superstitious; both devoted heart and soul to literature; and whatever shape their writings assumed—the moral satirists of the eras which they severally adorned.

It now remains for us to attempt an estimate of Ben Jonson's literary efforts. Let us look at him first as the writer of tragedies. We cannot say of him as, with Hazlitt, we may of Shakespeare, that he was "greatest in the greatest."

The author of "Every Man in his Humour," "The Fox," and "The Alchymist," must rank above the author of "Sejanus" and "Catiline." Jonson had all the keen observation and abundant wit which can descry and picture the weakness of human follies and fashions. He was deficient in that sublimer inspiration which is the voice of passion. In his selection of subjects also he was not happy. The regal history of our own country which Shakespeare has made his own, Jonson eschewed. His knowledge of ancient authors tempted him to draw from Roman annals the sources of tragic interest. In this, his learning became his snare. If we compare "Julius Cæsar" with either of Jonson's dramas drawn from the history of the same nation, our preference to Shakespeare's play must be yielded without a reservation. Shakespeare has avoided the prolix speeches, the literal translations from Latin writers, the too faithful adherence to minute incidents historical, but not, therefore, necessarily interesting; and he has seized, with the same instinct, on Roman character, exhibiting, as he always does, a profound knowledge of men's feelings, and the power of clothing mere abstract humanity in palpable flesh and blood.

"Sejanus" was the first of our poet's two tragedies.

It is an attempt to portray a state of things such as few pens, save those of Tacitus and Gibbon, are able to depict. The once great and free republic, whose internal history had been the vehement and protracted struggle of powerful classes, whose external history the record of valiantly won victories and extended territory, was now groaning under its own bulk, and had exchanged its ancient liberties for the despotism of the sword. Society was in a state so corrupt that barbarism, because purer, would have been preferable to it. It was an age of plots, intrigues, open assassinations and secret poisonings, adulteries and lewd abominations which insult all natural instinct. No vice was too abject to be indulged, no passion too morbid, no desire too impure to reap its unholy gratification. Those senators whose fathers had seen Catiline tremble at the thunders of Cicero, and Cæsar fall by the steel of Brutus, wore the fetters of servitude without a blush, and stooped to be panders and procurers, while slaves enjoyed a prouder criminality as the ministers of murder. There was no crime which the ingenuity of wickedness can invent which did not blacken the gown of the conscript and the purple of his imperial master.

Such an epoch would seem to possess some elements of dramatic interest and tragic grandeur. Contemporary writers, in such times, would stand in strong contrast, and may easily be classified. They must prostitute genius to be the slave of lust and folly, or take their rank among the stern satirists of vice. But when such an age becomes historical, one might think the dark landscape would present wonders and warnings which might fitly be exhibited on the stage. On a closer view, however, it would appear that there is a want of that rude healthy life and genuine feeling, without which the pomp and circumstance of the drama, however grand and gaudy,

would seem weak and sickly, and its utterance faltering and faint. The principle of decay is at work, and the empire tottering to its fall. There are none of those nobler strifes and passions which are the symptoms of vigorous existence. And we see this in the "Sejanus" of Ben Jonson. There are only two characters with whom the spectator can feel any sympathy, and they are not sufficiently prominent. They are two senators who are noble exceptions to the general depravity of their order, who blush at the degradation into which the once great assembly had sunk.

The amour—for it is a story, not of love, but of lust —that is woven into the plot has nothing of depth or tenderness in it. It may be a faithful picture of the sensual passion of such an age, but excites no sympathetic interest in the reader, and is therefore one among many reasons we might enumerate why this portion of history is not well adapted to dramatic action. But the play has faults which do not belong immediately to the subject. It is too long; and though it does not lack incident, it is incident of an undramatic kind. There is a lack of plot, the speeches are far too lengthy even for orations in the senate, and there are many long passages of rhyming heroics which none but the admirers of French tragedy and Dryden's uncongenial imitation of them will be so hazardous as to praise.

The characters are very numerous, and the most important are men whose crimes have nothing in them to dazzle or cheat us into a temporary admiration. Livia is an abandoned woman; Sejanus himself an unprincipled, ambitious man; and Tiberius a more bestial slave to sense, a murderer, a coward, and yet the despot of the degraded senate. The main interest is centred in these two bad men. The Emperor is a deeper dissembler, and more than equal to the reckless plot-making and versatile

cunning of Sejanus. There is a fault too in the moral. Wickedness in the highest place escapes unpunished, and the greatest criminal is unscathed. It is true that a bad man who is the instrument of another bad man's crimes should meet with fitting punishment, and it is also true that among the worst men united for any object, there must be a semi-romantic counterfeit honesty, and that he who first violates it should suffer the quickest fall. But there is a higher truth still, that the chief agent in the plot of crime should not escape the bolts of justice; and the fault in the moral lesson conveyed by this drama is, that it is less the fall of Sejanus than the triumph of Tiberius; and with the success of such a man who could sympathize?

"Catiline" was written after an interval of eight years, and bears evident marks of improvement, though a few faults are exaggerated.

In the former play, Jonson had kept with servile fidelity to the description he drew from ancient authors; but in this he goes a step farther in the wrong direction, and translates *verbatim* page upon page of Cicero and Sallust. For example, the well-known commencement of the first oration against Catiline, is thus rendered:

"Quousque tandem abutêre Catilina, patientia nostrâ? quamdiu furor iste tuus nos eludet? Quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? Nihilne te nocturnum præsidium Palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil concursus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatûs locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt?"

> "Whither at length wilt thou abuse our patience,
> Still shall thy fury mock us? To what license
> Dares thy unbridled boldness run itself?
> Do all the nightly guards kept on the palace,
> The city's watches, with the people's fears,
> The concourse of all good men—this so strong

> And fortified seat here of the Senate
> And present looks upon thee, strike thee nothing ?"

And again:

"O tempora! O mores! Senatus hæc intelligit, consul videt: hic tamen vivit. Vivit? immo vero in senatum venit, fit publici consilii particeps; notat et designat oculis unumquemque nostrûm. Nos autem, viri fortes, satisfacere reipublicæ videmur, si istius furorem ac tela vitemus."

> "O, age and manners! this the Consul sees,
> The Senate understands, yet this man lives.
> Lives? Ay, and comes here into council with us,
> Partakes the public cares, and with his eye
> Marks and points each man of us, to slaughter.
> And we good men do satisfy the state
> If we can shun but this man's sword and madness."

Jonson's admiration of the ancients was so unbounded, that he is tempted into long imitations and literal translations. When thrown on his own resources he is infinitely superior. The reader shall judge for himself. The following extracts will prove this assertion, and will also show the marked improvement of Catiline on Sejanus. They are the best passages of the respective plays. The first is Sejanus' soliloquy on fear.

> "How vain and vile a passion is this fear,
> What base, uncomely things it makes men do!
> Suspect their noblest friends, as I did this,
> Flatter poor enemies, entreat their servants,
> Stoop, court, and catch at the benevolence
> Of creatures unto whom, within this hour,
> I would not have vouchsafed a quarter look,
> Or piece of face! By you that fools call gods,
> Hang all the sky with your prodigious signs,
> Fill earth with monsters, drop the Scorpion down
> Out of the zodiak, or the fiercer lion;
> Shake off the loosen'd globe from her long hinge,
> Roll all the world in darkness, and let loose
> The enraged winds, to turn up groves and towns!

When I do fear again, let me be struck
With forked fire and unpitied die—
Who fears, is worthy of calamity."

This degenerates into rant, but is better than the translation of Cicero.

In the following extract from "Catiline," there is a Shakespearean strength and terseness.

"It is, methinks, a morning full of fate,
It riseth slowly, as her sullen car
Had all the weights of sleep and death hung at it!
She is not rosy fingered, but swollen black,
Her face is like a water turn'd to blood,
And her sick head is bound about with clouds,
As if she threatened night ere noon of day!
It does not look as it would have a hail,
Or health wish'd in it, as on other morns."

In this play he had added a chorus, of which one can scarcely say anything more severe than that it abounds in the common-places of the Greek chorus, unrelieved by its occasional sublimity and beauty. This was not merely in imitation of the Greek and Roman tragedy, but was the custom in old English plays. There are choruses in the "Cleopatra and Philotas" of Jonson's predecessor, Daniel.

The play of "Catiline," like that of "Sejanus," displays great learning. But we are here wearied, as before, by the endless prolixity of the speeches. Cicero is as rhetorical in his conversations with Curtius and Fulvia, as he is when haranguing the Senate. It commences strangely. The Ghost of Sylla rises and makes a very long speech, in the midst of which the curtain is drawn and Catiline discovered in his study. The Ghost advises Catiline to perpetrate all kinds of enormities, and then disappears. Catiline soliloquizes. Then ensues a scene between Aurelia, Orestilla, and himself. Next enter Lentulus and Cethegus. The scene between Fulvia and Curtius is only one part of a grossly licentious amour, very similar to the

one in the former play, and it would be blasphemy to compare this illicit intrigue with the warm, true passion of Romeo and Juliet.

There is a more than stage exaggeration in his portrayal of the guilt of Catiline and his fellow-conspirators. Men, however the appetite for blood and lust may become palled and morbid from satiety, scarcely destroy and ruin from the mere love of mischief and injury; and here they speak as if they did so from a keen enjoyment of crime for crime's sake, without the further incentives of pleasure, ambition, or revenge.

The fault in Jonson's two tragedies is that there is not enough to interest flesh and blood in them, and to stir the sympathies, the hopes and fears of humanity. There is a cold, historic sublimity, which, however it may command the homage of the intellect, awakes no responsive echo in the heart. The characters are true to history; true, therefore, to human nature; and they move on in the plot with stern and terrible decision. But the harsh outline lacks those lighter pencillings, those softer colourings, in which poetry surpasses history, and without which the picture, though bold and masterly, will not chain the loving gaze of the spectator to the painter's canvas.

The subject of his two tragedies, from its very nature, compelled Jonson to depict men, not as they should be, but as they are in a state of society corrupt and abominable.

Much better had he chosen some portions of our national history; but there was something deep and gloomy in his own mind that caused him to dwell on these dark scenes of guilt and ruin.

Had he introduced the comic element, it might have created a graceful contrast, and at any rate pleased the less educated portion of his audiences. His tragedies are better fitted for the student in the closet, than the

theatrical audience; and this is but a meagre praise of them as plays. But his greatest fault, and specially patent in these higher efforts of his muse, is that he cannot borrow and make what he borrows his own. He cannot assimilate. He is learned, his information vast and varied, but he cannot stamp with his own genius the thoughts of others, and impart any fresh beauty or lustre to them. On this ground he stands in exact contrast to his greatest contemporary. Shakespeare made his little learning go so far, that we think his powers encyclopædiacal. And he used his information with the utmost discretion, and coloured everything with his own originality. Jonson, who was infinitely more learned than Shakespeare, thrusts his reading so palpably before us, that we are sometimes tempted to suspect that he is a pedagogue and a pedant. With him much, and not a little learning, was a dangerous thing. As a tragic writer he has little of the majestic grandeur of Æschylus, the tempered softness and sweetness of Sophocles, the proverbial philosophy and eloquent declamation of Euripides; and if we compare him with the myriad-minded Shakespeare, he will weigh yet lighter in the balance. Those who know "Sejanus" and "Catiline," will not dare to class them with "The Agamemnon," "The Antigone" or "The Medea," and still less with "Hamlet" and "Macbeth." They will occupy no mean place in literature, when they are ranked more fairly with "Cato" and "Ion."

His best comedies are so generally known, that a lengthy critique on them would be tedious. Those that are less read are scarcely deserving of any notice, beyond the interest that must attach itself to any production from the pen of such a man. "Every Man in his Humour," "The Alchymist," "Volpone, or the Fox," and "The Silent Woman," are the best of the numerous comedies he has

left us. They have provoked unsparing censure from Bishop Hurd. He condemns the first as "an unnatural and as the painters say, hard delineation of a group of simply existing passions, wholly chimerical, and unlike to anything we may observe in the commerce of real life." He terms "The Alchymist" "a farcical comedy," asserts that "Volpone" is "not a complete model of comedy," and complains generally that Jonson's wit is too frequently caustic, his raillery coarse, and his humour excessive. We need not pause to express our utter disregard for such censure. When we know that Voltaire said that "Hamlet" seemed the work of a drunken savage, we can feel no surprise when we are thus dashed against the shallows of criticism. We live too in an age when tenth-rate men review the writings of their superiors with cheerful confidence and fatal facility. Mr. Gifford declares that Hurd knew little or nothing of Jonson's works, and while we tremble in charging dishonesty on a writer on Prophecy and a Bishop, we think Mr. Gifford is not far wrong. But we will favour our reader with one or two counter opinions from no less a man than Mr. Hallam. Speaking of "Every Man in his Humour," Mr. H. calls it "an extraordinary monument of early genius in what is seldom the possession of youth, a clear and unerring description of human character, various and not extravagant beyond the necessities of the stage." He adds, "It is, perhaps, the earliest of European domestic comedies, that deserves to be mentioned." Of "The Alchymist," he remarks that "The plot with great simplicity is continually animated and interesting, the characters are conceived and delineated with admirable boldness, truth, spirit and variety; the humour, especially in the two Puritans—a sect who now began to do penance on the stage—is amusing; the language, when it does not smell too much of book learning, is forcible and clear." Mr. Gifford is more enthusiastic

and unmeasured in his panegyric. He writes, "If a model be sought of all that is regular in design and perfect in execution in the English Drama, it will be found (if found at all) in 'The Alchymist.'" It is certainly a comedy of first-rate merit. A particular subject is singled out for attack, and learning, wit and sarcasm are brought combinedly to bear on it. It is equally to be admired, whether looked on as a play or a satire. By it Jonson destroyed the pretenders to the counterfeit science of Alchemy, and effected by his ridicule what legislative enactments had failed to do. There is a very clever though too lavish use of the jargon of the sham science; but Jonson puts an apology for this into the mouth of one of the characters. Sir Pertinax Surly is ridiculing Alchemy, and more particularly its nomenclature. Subtle replies:

> "Was not all the knowledge
> Of the Egyptians writ in mystic symbols?
> Speak not the Scriptures oft in parables?
> Are not the choicest fables of the poets,
> That were the fountains and the spring of wisdom,
> Wrapp'd in perplexed allegories?"

Sir Epicure Mammon's gluttony is pedantic in the extreme, but such minor faults are fully compensated for by its general merit. No one who has once read the play will forget the matchless portraiture of Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias. Abel Dragger was one of Garrick's famous characters. "The Fox" we rank with Hallam, as second to "The Alchymist" in merit. Dryden has praised "The Silent Woman," Hallam places it below the plays we have spoken of, but observes, "It is written with a great deal of spirit, and has a value as the representation of London life in the higher ranks at that time." He also remarks that both the story and passages are taken from Liberius, a writer not familiar to many readers, except such as Jonson or Mr. Hallam.

It has been well remarked that to give specimens of a play by extracts, is like showing a brick as a sample of the edifice of which it is but a small constituent part. The force and beauty of passages in a drama depend on their relative fitness to the character by whom, and the situation in which they are uttered. This would prevent our making quotations from the comedies; but to one passage in "Every Man in his Humour," we must call the reader's attention. It is the description of jealousy. Kitely speaks.

> "A new disease! I know not new or old,
> But it may well be called poor mortal's plague;
> For like a pestilence it doth infect
> The houses of the brain. First it begins
> Solely to work upon the phantasy,
> Filling her seat with such pestiferous air
> As soon corrupts the judgment; and from thence
> Sends like contagion to the memory;
> Still each to other giving the infection,
> Which as a subtle vapour spreads itself
> Confusedly through every sensitive part,
> Till not a thought or motion in the mind
> Be free from the black poison of suspect."

Now, such passages, as well as Jonson's great reputation for learning, have misled many, and among them, no less a man than Sir W. Scott, who, in his life of Dryden, says, that "Jonson gave an early example of metaphysical poetry." This word *metaphysical* is a talisman in the hands of some, a very sorcerer's wand, and magical in its powers of confusion. It has been well observed, that when a man is saying that which his audience does not comprehend, and which he does not himself comprehend, he is talking "metaphysics." Like a weapon clumsily handled, or a lantern not dexterously used, it will only wound or discover its possessor. Sir W. Scott's remark fully illustrates this. In using that word he shows either an ignorance of its meaning or an ignorance of the

writings to which he applies it. Jonson is not a whit more metaphysical than Shakespeare. Are there not frequent passages in Shakespeare where almost every line would form a text for a treatise on Psychology? It were hard to classify the poetry of any age as metaphysical and not metaphysical; but to say of Jonson, in contradistinction to Shakespeare, that he was so, is simply incorrect. What we suspect is here meant by the word is, that Shakespeare read men, and Jonson books; that one drew his characters from the study of human nature, and the other from the pages of philosophy. If the word is thus used in the wrong sense, the statement is only partially, if in the right one, it is wholly erroneous.

Jonson's masques are beautiful. Though with occasional extravagant fancies and strained conceits, they are full of learning and taste. They were many of them written for great festive occasions. There may seem to us something grotesque and cumbrous in their scenic splendour; and our Lord Mayor's show, the only relic we have of such an entertainment as Jonson's on James I.'s coronation, does not fill us with rapture at its grandeur or dignity. Some beautiful songs are introduced into them. The genius of the architect and the painter came in to aid the poet. The art of stage decoration was not, however, far advanced, and the scenery must have then been inferior to the language, as the latter is now below the former in

"Those gew-gaws men-children love to see,"

now exhibited, much to the expulsion of tragedy and comedy, on the boards of our theatres. "The Sad Shepherd" we have already criticised. The following are the opening lines, which, beautiful as they are, are not better than the greater portion of the masque:

"Here she was wont to go! and here! and here!
Just where those daisies, pinks, and violets grow;
The world may find the spring in following her,
For other print her airy steps ne'er left.
Her treading would not bend a blade of grass,
Or shake the downy blow-ball from his stalk!
But like the soft west wind she shot along,
And where she went the flowers took thickest root,
As she had sowed them with her odorous foot."

Milton was a great admirer of Jonson: his "Comus" is written very much in imitation of our poet's masques; but is not so fitted as they are for dramatic action. Some will remember in "Penseroso" these lines:

"Entice the dewy-feathered sleep,
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed
Softly on my eyelids laid."

Hurd has remarked that it is an imitation of the following passage in Jonson's "Vision of Delight," and Milton has not, we think, improved on the original:

"Break, Phant'sie, from thy cave of cloud,
And spread thy purple wings;
Now all thy figures are allowed,
And various shapes of things,
Create of airy forms a stream,
It must have blood, and nought of phlegm,
And tho' it be a waking dream,
Yet let it like an odour rise
To all the senses here,
And fall like sleep upon their eyes
Or musick in their ear."

As a translator he must not be forgotten. He has left a version of Horace's "Ars Poetica," and a few of the odes. The former is marvellously literal, and not so tame as might therefore be supposed. In the latter there is little to praise; but he has excelled these regular translations in passages of the masques and elsewhere, which he has borrowed from ancient authors and literally rendered. It is strange that Hurd, in his letter to Mason on

"the marks of imitation," has singled out the following instance. The original lines are from "Catullus," and are the following:

"Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis
Ignotus pecori, nullo convulsus aratro,
Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educit imber
Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ
Idem quum tenui carptus defloruit ungue
Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ."

In one of his masques, Jonson translates this:

"Look how a flower that close in closes grows,
Hid from rude cattle, bruised with no ploughs,
Which th' air doth stroke, sun strengthen, show'rs shoot higher,
It many youths and many maids desire;
The same when cropt by cruel hand 'tis withered,
No youths at all, no maidens have desired."

Hurd here calls Jonson "a servile imitator, and a painful translator." Now, what the true theory of translation is, is a matter on which the learned are as yet undecided. But the lines just quoted have far more force and beauty, than much smooth paraphrase, which is accepted as translation; and are more literal and infinitely superior to certain versions of Horace and Virgil lately published in a great University. There is at any rate this defence for them; they were written at a time when translation was in its infancy, and when great stress was laid upon verbal rendering. This was a false view of translation; but certainly more excusable than when now attempted in open violation of the fact, that such literal interpretations of the idioms of other languages compel the translator to violate those of his own, and in doing so, to commit a greater fault even than paraphrasing. There are two methods of translation, if, indeed, one deserves the name at all. The first is to give word for word

as a mere guide to those learning the language by such aid, a rendering which sacrifices to literal interpretation, the propriety and beauty of our own language; the next is, to give the spirit and meaning of a writer, in our own language, violating none of its laws and introducing no foreign idiom. The former of these theories was the earlier, and as in the lines we have quoted, was occasionally carried out with success. With the usual vitality of error, an attempt has been made to revive it; but fortunately this retrograde movement numbers as yet but few supporters. The true theory was next discovered; but after some time degenerated in many cases into paraphrase. Sir J. Denham, in his Preface to his translation of Book II. of "Æneid," has made a few remarks on this subject which we cannot help quoting. "I conceive it," he writes, "a vulgar error in translating poets to affect being *fidus interpres*. Let that care be with those who deal in matters of fact and matters of faith; but whosoever aims at it in poetry, as he attempts what is not required, so shall he never perform what he attempts; for it is not his business alone to translate language into language, but poesie into poesie, and poesie is of so subtle a spirit, that in pouring out of one language into another it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit is not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *caput mortuum*." Those who abet the attempt to revive the old system of translation should consider these remarks, and remember that on a very different theory, one of the best lengthy translations in the English language was produced —the "Georgics" of Virgil, by Mr. Sotheby.

Jonson is no exception to the rule that clear and strong utterance is one of the chief characteristics of genius, and that great poets have been good prose writers. The fragment entitled "Lumber, or Discoveries," sufficiently shows,

without appealing to his letters, dedications and prefaces, that English literature lost much by the destruction of his prose manuscripts. The small remnant that is left is full of erudite criticism, profound reflection, and great severity of judgment. There are notes on books and on life, arranged in a strange and arbitrary manner, written in a concise and pregnant style; and though they do not contain so much sententious wisdom, remind us forcibly of the "Essays" of Bacon. Two extracts we must give. The first shows us what laws of composition he laid down for himself; the second is interesting as a criticism on his great rival.

"For a man to write well, there are required three necessaries: to reade the best authors, observe the best speakers, and much exercise of his own style. In style to consider what ought to be written, and after what manner; he must first think and excogitate his matter; then choose his words and examine the weight of either; then take care in placing and ranking both matter and words, that the composition be comely, and to do this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be laboured and accurate; seeke the best and be not glad of the forward conceits, or first words that offer themselves to us, but judge of what we invent, and order what we approve. Repeat often what you have formerly written; which beside that it helps the consequence and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heate of imagination, that often cooles in the time of setting downe, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier by the going back, as we see in the contention of leaping, they jump farthest that fetch their race longest, or as in throwing a dart or javelin we force back our arms to make our tosse the stronger. Yet if we have a faire gale of wind I forbid not the steering out of our *angle* (?) or the favour of the gale deceive

us not. For all that we invent doth please us in the conception or birth, else we should never set it downe. But the safest is to returne to our judgement, and hand over again those things, the easinesse of which might make them justly suspected. So did the best writers in their beginnings. They imposed upon themselves care and industry. They did nothing rashly. They obtained first to write well, and then custome made it easie and a habit. By little and little, their matter showed itself to them more plentifully, their words answered, their composition followed; and all as in a well-ordered family, presented itselfe in the place. So that the summe of all is, ready writing makes not good writing; but good writing brings on ready writing: yet when wee thinke wee have got the faculty, it were then good to resist it, as to give a horse a check sometimes with a bit which doth not so much stop his course as stirre his metal."

Of Shakespeare he says: "I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer had been, 'Would he had blotted a thousand!' which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who chose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted; and to justify mine own candour; for I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent fancy, brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped. '*Sufflaminandus erat*,' as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power. Would the rule of it had been so too! Many times he fell into those things which could not escape laughter; as when he

said in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him, 'Cæsar, thou dost me wrong.' He replied, 'Cæsar did never wrong, but with just cause.;' and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was even more in him to be praised, than to be pardoned." This criticism, full as it is of candour, has been made the basis of charges of malignity against Shakespeare.

We have spoken of Jonson as the author of tragedy, of comedy, of masque, as a translator, and prose writer. But it is as a lyric poet also that we claim for him a homage and admiration which has hitherto been sparingly given, if yielded at all. In the aspects in which we have already viewed him, he is a great rather than a pleasing writer. He is not one of those whose works we make fireside friends, and the constant companions of our leisure and solitude. It is a duty more perhaps than a pleasure to read him. This is not a high praise of a writer of tragedy and comedy; but we must admit when we rise from the study, it is with a profound conviction of the vast powers of the writer. There is something grand, massive, colossal in his intellect. There is in him the profound erudition, and sustained dignity which we admire in Milton, and which cause us to gaze at reverent distance and muse in sacred silence, on his genius. And although we may not make either the one or the other familiar friends, as we do Homer and Shakespeare, with their more genial strains, yet they are not all gloom and grandeur. They have their lighter moods, and livelier utterances. Do not let us forget "Lycidas and l'Allegro," and the lyrics of Jonson. Than these nothing can be more exquisite, and their beauty is heightened by the contrast in which they stand to the other works. The smile of a countenance usually grave, has more charms than all the dimples and laughter of

Lalage. It is not only by their depth and their vigour that we must judge of poets.

With these remarks we proceed to give some of the Nugæ Canoræ of our Laureate.

TO ———.

O, do not wanton with those eyes,
Lest I be sick with seeing;
Nor cast them down, but let them rise,
Lest shame destroy their being.

O, be not angry with those fires,
For then their threats will kill me;
Nor look too kind on my desires,
For then my hopes will spill me.

O, do not steep them in thy tears,
For so will sorrow slay me;
Nor spread them as distract with fears,
Mine own enough betray me.

Mr. Gifford is as extravagant in his praise as the world has been cold in its appreciation. He speaks of this song thus: "If it be not the most beautiful song in the language, I freely confess, for my own part, that I know not where it is to be found." Now, it is pretty enough, but from Waller to Moore we could quote many that would equal, and some that would surpass it. Much better known, and far more beautiful, is Jonson's "Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke."

"Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death! ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd and fair and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee."

And so are the three following verses, selected from some

prefixed by Jonson to "The Touchstone of Truth," by J. Warre, published 1630:

"Truth is the trial of itself,
And needs no other touch,
And purer than the purest gold
Refine it ne'er so much.

"It is the life and light of love,
The sun that ever shineth,
And spirit of that special grace,
That faith and love defineth.

"It is the warrant of the word,
That yields a scent so sweet,
As gives a power to faith to tread
All falsehood under feet."

The following elegy, though some verses stand in weak contrast to others, which are beautiful, seems too much like the model of "In Memoriam" not to be quoted entire. Mr. Tennyson, the music of whose poetry is almost faultless, has improved on the metre and rhythm of the elder Laureate, but the similitude of some of the verses is very striking:

AN ELEGY.

Though beauty be the mark of praise,
And yours of whom I sing be such
As not the world can praise too much,
Yet 'tis your virtue now I raise.

A virtue like alloy, so gone
Throughout your form; as though that move
And draw and conquer all men's love,
This subjects you to love of one,

Wherein you triumph yet, because
'Tis of yourself, and that you use
The noblest freedom, not to choose
Against, or faith or honour's laws.

But who could less expect from you,
In whom alone love lives again,
By whom he is restored to men,
And kept, and bred, and brought up true?

*His falling temples you have rear'd,*
*The withered garlands ta'en away,*
*His altars kept from the decay*
*That envy wish'd and nature fear'd;*

And on them burn so chaste a flame,
With so much loyalty's expense,
As love to acquit such excellence
Is gone himself into your name.

And you are he, the Deity
To whom all lovers are design'd
That would their better objects find,
Among which faithful troop am I,

*Who as an offering at your shrine*
*Have sung this hymn, and here entreat*
*One spark of your diviner heat,*
*To light upon a love of mine,*

Which if it kindle not, but scant
Appear, and that to shortest view,
Yet give me leave t' adore in you
What I in her am grieved to want.

Our last quotation is well known, but many, we fear, while they listen to the beautiful strain, forget that it is one of the lighter efforts of the learned Jonson.

SONG TO CLELIA.

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sip
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee,
As giving it in hope that there
It could not withered be;

But thou thereon dids't only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me,
Since when it grows, it smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

We have spoken frequently in our life of the poet, of the rancour with which his character has been assailed. Posterity have scarcely been more merciful to his fame as a writer. Dibdin has slandered him and sought to depreciate his merits. Hume has penned a shallow, flippant notice of him, as well as of Shakespeare.* Schlegel, with too great severity, but with more depth and truth, has called him "a younger contemporary and rival of Shakespeare, who laboured in the sweat of his brow, and with no great success, to expel the romantic drama from the English stage, and to form it on the model of the ancients."† Hazlitt confesses that he cannot much relish Ben Jonson, and remarks that his genius "resembles the grub more than the butterfly, and plods and grovels on, and wants wings to wanton in the idle summer's air, and catch the golden light of poetry."‡ It should be remembered that it is in contrasting him with Shakespeare that Hazlitt is thus depreciatory. In attempting the same anti-parallel, Sir W. Scott falls into more exaggerated error. "The one," he says, "is like an ancient statue, the beauty of which, springing from the exactness of proportion, does not always strike at first sight, but rises upon us as we bestow time in considering it; the other is the representation of a monster, which is at first only surprising, and ludicrous and disgusting ever after."§

How unfortunate for the fame of Jonson that he had not lived a generation before or after his immortal rival! In such a time he had reigned supreme. In dividing the kingdom of literature, though the dominions of one are wider than the other, the colleagues in the empire are scarce ever mentioned without an invidious comparison

* History of England.
† Lectures on Dramatic Literature.
‡ Lectures on English Comic Writers.
§ Life of Dryden.

being instituted. In literature, as in religion, there is a strong tendency to party spirit—a wish to make a faction and appoint a leader—a setting up of Paul and Apollos, instead of a catholic admiration of genius apart from personal feelings and prejudices.

To counter-balance the severe remarks, which we have quoted, we must remember that Jonson received the warmest eulogies from his greatest contemporaries; and we therefore give two quotations from Fuller and Dryden, where the comparison is handled with temper and judgment. Fuller, in speaking of the "Wit Combats" between Shakespeare and Jonson at the "Mermaid Tavern," adds: "Which two, I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances: Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."

Dryden writes: "As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit, and language, and humour also in some measure we had before him, but something of art was wanting to the drama before he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such

a height. Humour was his proper sphere, and in that he delighted most to present mechanical people. He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times whom he has not translated in 'Sejanus' or 'Catiline.' But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch, and what would be theft in other poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, it was that he weaved it too closely and laboriously, in his comedies especially; perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanize our language, leaving the words he translated almost as much Latin as he found them, wherein, though he learnedly followed their language, he did not enough comply with the idioms of ours. If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the most correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer or father of dramatic poets, Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing. I admire him; but I love Shakespeare."

Clarendon says of him: "Ben Jonson's name can never be forgotten, having by his very good learning, and the severity of his nature and manners, very much reformed the stage, and, indeed the English poetry itself. His natural advantages were judgment to order and govern fancy rather than success of fancy, his production being slow and upon deliberation, yet then abounding with great wit and fancy, and will live accordingly; and surely as he did exceedingly exalt the English language in eloquence, propriety, and masculine expression, so he was

the best judge and fittest to prescribe rules to poetry and poets of any man who had lived with or before him."

We conclude with an extract from Churchill's "Rosciad:"

> "Next, Jonson sat, in ancient learning train'd;
> His rigid judgment Fancy's flights restrain'd,
> Correctly prun'd each wild luxuriant thought,
> Mark'd out her course, nor spar'd a glorious fault.
> The book of Man he read with nicest art,
> And ransack'd all the secrets of the heart;
> Excited Penetration's utmost force,
> And trac'd each passion to its proper source;
> Then, strongly marked, in liveliest colours drew,
> And brought each foible forth to public view.
> The coxcomb felt a lash in every word,
> And fools hung out, their brother fools deterr'd;
> His comic humour kept the world in awe
> And laughter frighten'd folly more than law."

## SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT.

The lot of Sir William Davenant fell on strange and stirring times. He contributed to found a new literature, witnessed the installation of a new political system, and the birth-convulsions of a new religion. His life spanned that mighty chasm which separates the ancient from the modern of English History: when those principles of thought and action which had cradled the infant kingdoms of Europe, and toned their civilization, retreated angrily before the stormy ingress of a meaner though stronger spirit. But unlike his great contemporary, Milton, his character took no form or colour from the solemn events that were passing around him. If he was prominent in the scene, it was from an inherent buoyancy, rather than from any intellectual superiority; nor from the perusal of his works can we gather that the wreck of old opinions that everywhere met his gaze, affected him with apprehension, or excited him to deeper thought or more vigorous expression. To his private history a more touching interest attaches. Shakespeare was his early friend. He, whose very name to us is an inspiration, listened to his boyish

talk, encouraged his awakening literary tastes. The matchless harmony of his deepest utterances was then newly vibrating on the public ear. Davenant pondered over them, loved them to the last, taught others to love them, but never penetrated the mystery of their influence. Thus he lived to witness the banishment of his idol from the English stage, and was himself an effectual instrument in contributing to such a result.

He was born at Oxford in the parish of St. Martin, towards the close of February, 1605. His father was a vintner in that city, and kept the "Crown Inn" near Carfax, where Shakespeare was accustomed to stay on his annual journeys from London to Warwickshire. His mother, who was a woman of great beauty and sprightliness, contrasting strangely with the severe gravity of her husband, has well-nigh had her fair fame tarnished through the culpable vanity or levity of her son, who among boon companions would sometimes indulge in sly inuendoes touching Shakespeare's preference for his father's inn. "Where are you running to so fast?" said an Oxford dignitary one day to little Davenant, whom he met in the street, scampering along in breathless haste. "I am going to see Godfather Shakespeare," replied the boy. "Fie! fie!" rejoined the divine, "why are you so superfluous? Have you not learnt the third commandment?" This unbecoming jest, Davenant himself in after years, with strange indelicacy adopted; and was wont to observe, though an impartial judge will scarcely concur in his estimate of the likelihood of its truth, that "it seemed to him he writ with the very pen that Shakespeare wrote, and was contented enough to be thought his son." Aubrey, too, observes that he "was proud of being thought so, and had often, in his cups, owned the report to be true to Butler the poet." Such unseemly jocularity would have been unworthy of record, had it not been made the ground-

work of serious comment by writers of credit and position, who have inclined to favour the insinuation. There exist not, however, the slightest grounds for such an imputation, which is falsified by all we know of the mother of Sir William Davenant, and jars with our well-grounded belief in the irreproachable moral character of our great national dramatist.

Davenant, in very early life, gave promise of a taste for literature, and one of his first attempts at composition was "An Ode in Remembrance of Master William Shakespeare." He acquired the rudiments of knowledge at the grammar school of his native parish, then flourishing under the management of Edward Sylvester, and in 1621, he matriculated at Lincoln College, his father being Mayor of the city that year. He pursued his studies there for some little time, but did not proceed to his degree. Wood, who terms him the "sweet swan of Isis," tells us "he obtained some smattering of logic," so "that, though he wanted much of University learning, yet he made as high and noble flights in the poetical faculty as fancy could advance without it." On quitting the University, he went to London; and we first hear of him as page to the famous Frances, Duchess of Richmond. The eccentric career of this lady had acquired for her considerable notoriety, and in her household she observed all the etiquette and ceremony of a court. She was the grand-daughter of the third Duke of Norfolk, had been thrice married, and, to complete her ambition, aspired to the august dignity of Queen of England. Her first match, which appears to have been made through affection or caprice, was with "one Prannel, a vintner's son," for which, in her after days of grandeur and magnificence she was frequently and sharply twitted. Her second husband was Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. During her widowhood, she had inspired one Sir George Rodney, a Somersetshire gentle-

man, with so infatuated a passion, that, on her marriage, his frenzy acquired the mastery over his reason; and retiring to an inn in the town in which the Earl and Countess were staying, he composedly drew up a copy of verses, which he transcribed in his own blood, sent to the object of his extravagant ardour, and then ran himself through with his sword. She next married Ludowick Stuart, Duke of Lenox and Richmond. "After his decease," says Wilson, "Lenox and Richmond, with the great title of Duchess, gave period to her honour, which could not arrive at her mind, she having the most glorious and transcendant heights in speculation; for finding the King a widower, she vowed, after so great a Prince as Richmond, never to be blown with the kisses, or eat at the table of a subject, and this vow must be spread abroad that the King might take notice of the bravery of her spirit. But this bait would not catch the old King, so that she missed her aim; and to make good her resolution, she speciously observed her rule to the last."

Davenant next resided in the household of Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, a poet and philosopher, a patron of learning, and the friend of Sir Philip Sydney. His stay there was but short, as that nobleman fell in 1628 by the hand of one of his servants, who stabbed him in a fit of discontent, and afterwards, "to save the law a trouble," as Winstanley tersely expresses it, put an end to his own existence. This melancholy event was a severe blow to the hopes of Davenant. He was thereby thrown upon his own resources; and, as frequently happens, misfortune begat success, as it necessitated the attempt to achieve it. Bereft of his patron, without fortune or position, he addressed himself seriously to the business of life, and his predilections pointed to the theatre. In the following year, he presented for representation his "Albovine, King of the Lombards," a tragedy written in prose, the plot taken

from a novel by Bandello. He had already had some practice in dramatic composition, having some two or three years previously written a piece called "The Cruel Mother," which was duly licensed by the Master of the Revels, but whether it was ever brought on the stage or not is uncertain. His present tragedy, however, was acted with great applause, and lifted him at once into notice. It was published with a dedication to the favourite Car, Earl of Somerset, which commences with the following fulsome conceit: "My Lord, you read this tragedy, and smiled upon it that it might live; and therein your mercy was divine, for it exceeded your justice." And in conclusion he says: "I shall live in vain unless you still continue to acknowledge, your humblest creature, DAVENANT."

Recommendatory verses were prefixed to it, as was the fashion of that age, written by Sir Henry Blount, Hyde, afterwards Earl of Clarendon, and others; and the success of this piece confirmed his tastes and decided his future career. For the next eight years he resided constantly about the Court, in high favour with the principal men of wit and fashion of the age. He possessed a pleasing address, a handsome person, buoyant spirits and a ready wit; and his society was courted and enjoyed by the choicest intellects of the day. The leaven of the courtier was strongly infused into his nature, but he exhibited only its more alluring qualities.

Though devoid of any very lofty principles of honour, he was not destitute of generous and manly sentiments, as the sincerity and duration of his friendships with several eminent men abundantly testifies. Carew, Sir John Suckling, Endymion Porter, Jermyn, afterwards Earl of St. Albans, the Hon. Henry Howard and others were among his friends; and his poems show that he was regarded with consideration by the Earl of Dorset, the Lord Treasurer Weston, and other influential personages in the State.

This sudden gale of success acted as a refreshing stimulant to his sanguine temperament, and during the period in question he poured forth a series of plays, which (though there is some difficulty in ascertaining the dates of each) seem to have appeared in the following order of succession:

"The Colonel."
"The Just Italian."
"The Wits."
"Love and Honour."
"News from Plymouth."
"The Unfortunate Lovers."
"The Fair Favourite."
"The Spanish Lovers."

"The Just Italian" is a witty, bustling production, and exhibits great skill in contrivance, but on its first appearance was only saved from condemnation by the expressed approbation of the Earl of Dorset. "The Wits," dedicated "to the chiefly-beloved of all, that ingenious and noble Endymion Porter, of his Majesty's Bedchamber," had likewise a narrow escape on the first night of representation, though it afterwards had a successful run.

Sir Henry Herbert, who was Master of the Revels at this time, and possessed the privilege of licensing plays, was occasionally, like the Lord Chamberlain in modern times, troubled with qualms of conscience, occasioned by the delicate nature of his duties.

"This morning," he writes, "being the 9th Jan., 1633, the Kinge was pleased to call mee into his withdrawinge chamber, to the windowe, wher he went over all that I had croste in Davenant's play-booke, and allowing of faith and slight to bee asseverations only, and no oathes, markt them to stande, and some other few things, but in the greater part allowed of my reformations. This was done upon a complaint of Mr. Endymion Porter's, in December.

"The Kinge is pleased to take faith, death, slight, for asseverations and no oathes, to which I doe humbly submit, as my master's judgment; but, under favour, conceive them to be oathes, and enter them here to declare my opinion and submission."

The play which gave rise to this difference of sentiment between his Majesty and Sir Henry must have been "The Wits," as on the following day there is this entry in his journal:

"The 10th Jan., 1633, I returned unto Mr. Davenant his play-booke of 'The Witts,' corrected by the Kinge.

"The King would not take the booke at Mr. Porter's hands, but commanded him to bring it unto mee, which he did, and likewise commanded Davenant to come to me for it as I believe; otherwise he would not have byn so civill."

Davenant doubtless being irate with the keen-eyed Master of the Revels for detecting so much bad language lurking in his seemingly innocent production.

At a later date there is the following entry in the same work:

"'The Witts' was acted on Tuesday night, the 28 January, 1633, at Court, before the Kinge and Queene. Well likt. It had a various fate on the stage, and at Court, though the Kinge commended the language, but dislikt the plott and characters."

In "Love and Honour" may be traced manifest imitations of the style of Shakespeare; and the care manifested in the composition shows that success had no effect in abating the most strenuous endeavours to deserve it.

Evelyn, writing many years later, after the Restoration, says, "I was so idle as to go see a play called 'Love and Honour.' Dined at Arundel House; and that evening discoursed with his Majestie about shipping, in which he

was exceeding skilfull." From which it appears that the performance took place in the day-time.

Davenant likewise produced the following masques for the entertainment of the Court:

"The Temple of Love," 1634, "a masque presented by the Queen's Majesty and her ladies at Whitehall."

"The Triumphs of the Prince d'Amours," 1635, represented in the Middle Temple Hall, and written at the request of the Benchers for an entertainment given by the Inn to the Prince Charles Elector Palatine, nephew of King Charles I.

"Britannia Triumphans," 1637.

"Salmacida Spolia," presented to the King and Queen at Whitehall, the 21st of January, 1639; the scenery and ornaments of which were the work of Inigo Jones.

The first nobles of the day took their parts in these pageants; and in "The Temple of Love," the Queen herself, who held Davenant in great favour, condescended to appear—a circumstance which the rising puritanical spirit of the times did not suffer to pass unnoticed. She likewise honoured the entertainment given at the Middle Temple in a marked manner.

Sir William Herbert writes: "On Wensday, the 23 of Febru., 1635, the Prince d'Amours gave a masque to the Prince Elector and his brother in the Middle Temple, when the Queene was pleased to grace the entertaynment by putting off majesty to putt on a citizen's habitt, and to sett upon the scaffold on the right hand amongst her subjects.

"The Queene was attended in the like habitts by the Marques Hamilton, the Countess of Denbighe, the Countess of Holland, and the Lady Elizabeth Feildinge. Mrs. Basse, the law woman (*i. e.*, the woman who had the care of the Hall), leade in this royal citizen and her company.

"The Earle of Hollande, the Lord Goringe, Mr. Percy, and Mr. Jermyn were the men that attended.

"The Prince Elector sat in the midst, his brother Robert on the right hand of him, and the Prince d'Amours on the left.

"The masque was very well performed in the dances, scenes, cloathing, and musique; and the Queene was pleased to tell mee, at her going away, that she liked it very well.

"Henry Lause
"William Lause } made the musique.

"Mr. Corseilles made the scenes."

Much ridicule has, in later times, been heaped upon these diversions; and we have been taught to smile at the grotesque taste which was gratified with such fanciful exaggerations; but there is this diversity between a Court pageant of the olden time and a modern costume ball. In our advanced stage of civilization, we rely solely upon the genius of the tailor and the milliner; while our forefathers, less enlightened, called in the additional aid of the poet and the artist. The noble of the nineteenth century lounges languidly through a quadrille, bedizened in the coxcombry of an exploded fashion; the noble of the seventeenth exercised both body and mind, and betrayed a heartiness of enjoyment that would provoke only wonder and contempt in a more refined and fastidious age.

Davenant had now established his fame as a popular dramatist, and his successive productions were sure of a cordial welcome. They, as must the works of all save the chosen few, have now fallen into oblivion; so that their very titles are probably quite new to the majority of our readers; but they will repay the labour of perusal. They were the popular pieces of their day. Men the most competent, from their acquirements to judge, pro-

nounced in their favour, and the applause of the vulgar was the ready ratification of the decision of the learned. These, together with some miscellaneous poems, constituted his claim to the laureateship when Ben Jonson died in 1637. For sixteen months the office remained in abeyance. The Queen interested herself in behalf of Davenant, and he obtained the appointment on the 13th of December, 1638.

Thomas May, the translator of "Lucan," who had expected it from the favour of the King, was sorely nettled; and in after years, the quondam royalist, when writing his parliamentary history, could not altogether forget his paltry disappointment. "As for Mr. Davenant," observes his biographer, "he continued very steadfast in his old road, adhered to his old principles and his old friends, writing from time to time new poems, exhibiting new plays, and having the chief direction and management of the Court diversions, so long as the disorders of those times would permit."

The following tribute to Davenant's poetical merits is from the pen of Sir John Suckling:

TO MY FRIEND,

WILL. DAVENANT,

ON HIS OTHER POEMS.

Thou hast redeemed us, Will, and future times
Shall not account unto the age's crimes
Dearth of pure wit: since the great lord of it,
Donne, parted hence, no man has ever writ
So near him, in 's own way. I would commend
Particulars; but then, how should I end
Without a volume? Every line of thine
Would ask (to praise it right) twenty of mine.

The struggle between the Crown and the Commons was now rapidly approaching a crisis, and Davenant's station about the Court rendered him too conspicuous an

object to be passed over unnoticed by the popular party. In May, 1641, he was accused of being implicated in a plot set on foot to induce the army to desert the Parliament for the King. Davenant, aware of the inevitable consequence of such an accusation at such a time, sought safety in flight, and a proclamation was issued for his arrest. He was overtaken at Faversham, brought back to London, and consigned to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. In the month of July, he was released on bail, and a second time betook himself to flight. His second attempt was as unsuccessful as the former one, as he was seized and detained by the Mayor of Canterbury. Sir John Mennis thus introduces the circumstance in some indifferent verses addressed to a friend:

"To make amends,
There's news for Jack to tell his friends.
You heard of late what chevaliers,
(Who durst not tarry for their ears)
Proscribed were for laying a plot,
Which might have ruin'd God knows what!
Suspected for the same 's Will Davenant,
Whether he have been in't or haven't.
He is committed, and like sloven,
Lolls on his bed in Garden Coven;
He had been rack'd, as I am told,
But that his body would not hold.
Soon as in Kent they saw the bard,
(As, to say truth, it is not hard,
For Will has in his face the flaws
Of wounds received in 's country's cause.)
They flew on him, like lions passant,
And tore his nose, as much as was on't:
They call'd him superstitious groom,
And Popish dog, and curre of Rome;
But this I'm sure was the first time
That Will's religion was a crime.
Whate'er he is in outward part,
He's sure a poet in his heart.
But 'tis enough: he is my friend,
And so am I, and there's an end."

Eventually, Davenant contrived to effect his escape, and

remained abroad two years. Jermyn, Sir John Suckling, Percy, brother to the Earl of Northumberland, were of the number of those who were implicated, and fled on this occasion. The Queen was at that time residing in France, and had been active in collecting military stores for the army, under the command of the Earl of Newcastle. The opportunity was tempting, and Davenant, sick of exile and inaction, returned with the transports, and offered his services to the Earl. He was named Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance, but the appointment excited some dissatisfaction, and a military laureate was deemed a fitting subject for ridicule. It must have been forgotten, or perhaps it was remembered to his disadvantage, that the General himself was a play-writer. Davenant's subsequent conduct showed that he was deficient neither in skill nor bravery, and fully approved his patron's discernment. He was present at the siege of Gloucester (September, 1643), and received the honour of knighthood for his signal services on that occasion.

His military avocations did not entirely break off his connection with the booksellers, since he published about this time a tragedy, a tragi-comedy, and a volume entitled "Madagascar and other Poems." To the second edition of this book, published some years later, he prefixed a few graceful lines, which contrast favourably with the prolix dedications customary at that time. They run thus: "If these poems live, may their memories by whom they were cherished, Endymion Porter and H. Jermyn, live with them."

He shortly afterwards returned to France, renounced his religion, and conformed to the Church of Rome. His whole course of life, which was tinctured with the dissoluteness that almost became a badge of his party, forbids us to believe that he was ever the subject of any very

serious convictions; and his attendance upon the Queen, who was a Roman Catholic, and possibly the belief that the maintenance of the Established Church in its integrity would prove an insuperable obstacle to any reconciliation between the King, and the faction who were now obtaining the ascendancy, might have induced him to desert what he deemed a hopeless cause. "His private opinion," says Aubrey, "was, that religion at last (*e.g.*, a hundred years hence) would come to a settlement, and that in a kind of ingeniose Quakerisme." Why, if such was his private opinion, he should desert to so opposite a system as the papal one, is not very apparent.

The Queen, who, as Lord Clarendon observes, "was never advised by those who either understood or valued his (the King's) true interest," was induced about this time to send an embassy to the King, to entreat him to consult his own safety by sacrificing the Church; and Sir William Davenant was selected, on account of his recent conversion, to conduct this delicate negotiation. The choice was as injudicious as the failure was signal, and we read that, on Davenant urging his reasons for the unpalatable course he was suggesting, "the King was transported with so much passion and indignation, that he gave him more reproachful terms and a sharper reprehension than he did ever towards any other man, and forbade him to presume to come again into his presence," whereupon he returned, "exceedingly dejected and afflicted."

Feeling much chagrined at the ill success of his diplomacy, he returned to France, and settled at Paris, where the Prince of Wales was then staying. He here began his much talked-of metrical romance, or epic, "Gondibert," which Pope justly characterizes as "not a good poem, if you take it in the whole, though there are many good things in it." The first two books, which he wrote at the Louvre while staying with Lord Jermyn, were published

in 1651, with a long letter to Hobbes prefixed, and a shorter and well-written reply from that philosopher. They caused some sensation on their appearance, and long divided the suffrage of the literary world. Hobbes, Waller, Cowley, Aikin, Hendley defended them; Rymer, Blackwall, Grange, Knox, Hurd, Hayley are amongst those who have most severely censured them. A satirical pamphlet on the subject, written by Sir John Denham and others, gave Davenant some annoyance.

In 1650, his active mind, barred from its accustomed occupation, projected a plan for leading out a body of workmen to Virginia, as that colony was in great need of artificers. This scheme was warmly encouraged by the Queen, and he was not long in collecting a band of men, chiefly weavers, with whom he embarked at one of the ports of Normandy.

But Davenant was wofully unsuccessful in all his travels, for his little vessel had hardly quitted the French coast when it was pounced upon by a Parliament ship and captured, and he himself carried a prisoner to Cowes Castle, in the Isle of Wight. Here in his forlorn solitude he set to work again on "Gondibert," and had written about half of the third book, when he laid aside his pen, apprehensive that the darkness of the grave was about to enclose him. "I am here arrived," says he, "at the middle of the third book, which makes an equal half of the poem, but 'tis high time to strike sail and cast anchor, though I have run but half my course, when at the helm I am threatened with Death; who, though he can visit us but once, seems troublesome; and even in the innocent may beget such a gravity as diverts the music of verse. And I beseech thee, if thou art pleased with what is written, not to take ill, that I run not on till my last gasp; for in a worthy design I shall ask leave to desist, when I am interrupted in so great an experiment as dying, and 'tis

an experiment to the most experienced, for no man, though his mortifications may be much greater than mine, can say he has already died."

His situation soon became critical in the extreme. The Parliament delivered him over by an ordinance to the High Commission Court, and he was removed to the Tower, preparatory to his being tried for his life. How he escaped we have no very authentic grounds for determining; but Milton is said to have interceded for him, and two aldermen of York, who had formerly been his prisoners under Newcastle, and whose escape he had favoured, hearing of his distress, hastened to London, and exerted themselves so effectually in his behalf as to obtain his pardon. Aubrey says: "'Twas Harry Martyn that saved Sir William's life; in the House when they were talking of sacrificing one, then said Henry, that in sacrifices they were always offered pure and without blemish; 'now ye talk of making a sacrifice of an old rotten rascal,' alluding to the personal deformity caused by his irregular course of life, and on which the wits were so 'cruelly bold.'" And not the wits only, but others of less pretensions ventured to indulge their raillery upon his unfortunate peculiarity. One day, while pensively perambulating the mews, a beggar-woman followed him, and with frequent and earnest tones implored Heaven his eyesight might be spared. Davenant, annoyed, at length turned round, and asked why she was so solicitous about his eyesight, as he felt no symptoms of approaching blindness. "Perhaps not," said she, "but if you ever should, you have nothing to hang your spectacles upon."

Though pardoned, he was not liberated, as, two years later, we find him still a prisoner in the Tower, by the following letter inserted in "Whitelocke's Diary."

Whitelocke writes: "12th Oct., 1652.—I received this letter from Sir William Davenant."

"My Lord,

"I am in suspense whether I should present my Thankfulness to your Lordship for my Liberty of the Tower; because, when I consider how much of your time belongs to the Public, I conceive that, to make a Request to you, and to thank you afterwards for the Success of it, is to give you no more than a Succession of Trouble, unless you are resolved to be continually patient and courteous to afflicted Men, and agree in your Judgment with the late wise Cardinal; who was wont to say, If he had not spent as much time in Civilities as in Business, he had undone his master.

"But whilst I endeavour to excuse this Present of Thankfulness, I shall rather ask your Pardon for going about to make a Present to you of myself, for it may argue me to be incorrigible, that, after so many afflictions, I have yet so much Ambition as to desire to be at Liberty, that I may have more opportunity to obey your Lordship's Commands, and show the World how much I am,

"My Lord,

"Your Lordship's most obliged,

"Most humble, and obedient Servant,

"WILLIAM DAVENANT.

"Tower, Oct. 9th, 1652."

By unceasing exertions, however, he finally obtained his release, and then began to reflect how he might resume his old occupation. He showed great address in his method of proceeding. Tragedies and comedies were held to be abominable things by the dominant faction, and yet the prevalent hypocrisy was already beginning to disgust even those who had watched the progress of political events with undisguised satisfaction. He knew if he could once open a house, he should be sure of an audience; and Davenant, ever restless, loved exertion, and

was inspired by difficulty. After much scheming and solicitation, to the surprise of every one, he was successful. The required licence was obtained, but his dramatic exhibitions were to hold no affinity with ordinary plays—laughter and tears were discountenanced. Instead of the regular drama, the audience was to be roused by sonorous declamation, or soothed by the gentle influence of music. Lord Keeper Whitelocke, Serjeant Maynard, and other men of note, looked with favour on the undertaking; and responsible citizens were pledged that the performances should be conducted with decency, seemliness, and without rudeness.

The first of these "entertainments," as they were termed, took place at Rutland House, Charterhouse Yard, May, 1656, and was published in the following September.

A copy of the piece, with the following letter, was forwarded to the Lord Keeper:

"My Lord,

"When I consider the nicety of the Times, I fear it may draw a curtain between your Lordship and our Opera; therefore I have presumed to send your Lordship, hot from the Press, what we mean to represent; making your Lordship my supreme Judge, though I despair to have the honour of inviting you to be a Spectator. I do not conceive the perusal of it worthy any part of your Lordship's leisure, unless your ancient relation to the Muses make you not unwilling to give a little entertainment to Poetry, though in so mean a dress as this, and coming from "My Lord,

"Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

"WILLIAM DAVENANT."

Its title runs: "The First Day's Entertainment at

Rutland House, by Declamations and Music, after the Manner of the Ancients." The success was complete. This literary curiosity, interesting as being the first representation on our present stage, is highly ingenious, and affords a favourable specimen of Davenant's skill and mental resources. It was a bold experiment. He had to amuse his auditory, yet not let them think they were amused—to give them a play, and yet cozen them into a belief that it was not a play they were witnessing, but something totally different. It began with a flourish of music, for which Davenant had procured the assistance of some able composers. Then came a somewhat long prologue, in which the poet gives a sketch of what the audience were to expect, and the curtains were closed again. Then "A consort of instrumental music adapted to the sullen disposition of Diogenes, being heard awhile, the curtains are suddenly opened, and in two gilded rostras appear sitting Diogenes the Cynic and Aristophanes the Poet, in habits agreeable to their country and professions: who declaim against and for public entertainment by moral representations;" and Diogenes accordingly addresses the Athenians in a long speech, in which are elaborately set forth the folly and evil of all public amusements. Then "a consort of music befitting the pleasant disposition of Aristophanes being heard," that personage comes forward, and makes a long speech on the other side of the question, in which, of course, he has the best of the argument. This done, "the curtains are suddenly closed, and the company entertained by instrumental and vocal music." This was the serious section of the entertainment—the tragedy before the farce—which was wound up by a song, containing a brief summing-up of the views of each antagonist.

The second part was something similar, though in a lighter strain. "The song being ended, a consort of

instrumental music, after the French composition, being heard awhile, the curtains are suddenly opened, and in the rostras appear sitting a Parisian and a Londoner, in the livery robes of both cities, who declaim concerning the pre-eminence of Paris and London." The Parisian has the first speech, in which all the odd customs and habits of the Londoners are ridiculed with considerable humour. "After a consort of instrumental music, imitating the Waites of London, the Londoner rises," and retaliates on the pleasantry of his antagonist in a similar vein; then "the curtains are suddenly closed, and the company entertained by instrumental music and a song. The song ended, the curtains are drawn open again, and the Epilogue enters." The Epilogue performs his business, and "after a flourish of loud music, the curtain is closed, and the entertainment ended."

With this singular performance, our theatres recommenced their career under the Protectorate, after their violent suppression during the civil troubles. It was not a drama, it was not an opera, though partaking of the nature of each; and thus the English stage, at its second birth, received an impress which has affected its future progress.

Although from the time of Sir William Davenant to that of Sir Bulwer Lytton, men the most conspicuous in their day for literary attainments have been candidates for the palm of dramatic excellence, their efforts in this walk have been either feeble or exaggerated.

During the intervening period we have had authors who have excelled in every other department of literature, but not one dramatist who can be compared with that "giant race before the flood," the play-writers of the Elizabethan age. Mere amusement has been the aim; and with no more exalting object to purify its tone, the theatre at one time sank to be the nursery of vice, the

hot-bed of idleness and depravity. The grandeur and the depth of its earlier votaries were unappreciated. It recognised no ennobling mission, ministered to no lofty purpose, inculcated no eternal truths; and therefore it has produced no great embodiment of thought and passion, appealing to the universal sympathies of the human race. One main cause was the frivolity and coarseness of the times which immediately succeeded the revival of the drama. Davenant himself had a masculine taste, and his productions exhibit nothing offensive to virtue or morality. But not so his immediate successor, Dryden. The rhyming plays of that great poet are disgraceful to the author who so debased his talents, and to the public that not only endured but applauded such offensive exhibitions. Then, too, when the intolerant bigotry of the Puritan fanaticism had generated that awful revulsion of tastes, manners, feelings and beliefs, that spread with such baneful rapidity over the land; and men sought relief from their previous forced hypocrisy in a licentious and depraved extravagance, the wickedness found its fullest and most perfect expression in the theatre; and the most consummate wit was exhausted in ridiculing all the loftier propensions of man's nature, and the foundation-principles of morality and social life. A literature nursed in so poisonous an atmosphere, necessarily progressed to a sickly maturity. Effects frequently become causal; and long after the nation had changed, the old manners exercised a traditionary influence on the stage, and literary aspirants continued to model their conceptions by established precedents.

The next piece brought out was styled the "Playhouse to be Let, containing the History of Sir Francis Drake, and the Cruelty of the Spaniards at Peru." The piece itself is a stranger jumble than the title. It is divided into five acts, and each act is a complete performance.

In the first act, which is a sort of introduction to the rest, we have depicted the distress of the players in vacation time, compelling them to let their theatre. Several applicants come forward, offering to take the building for various purposes, and among the rest a Frenchman proposes to hire it for the performance of a farce by his troop of French actors. The second act constitutes the farce which is the "Sganarelle," of Molière, translated into broken English. The third act gives the history of Sir Francis Drake, put together as a sort of comic opera; and the serious opera follows in the fourth act, which depicts the cruelties of the Spaniards in Peru. The fifth act is a burlesque, written in the heroic measure, upon Antony's passion for Cleopatra, which was so popular that it was frequently acted afterwards as a separate piece. The amiable and pious Evelyn attended the representation, and thus mentions the fact in his diary:

"5 *May*, 1659.—I went to visit my brother in London, and next day to see a new opera, after the Italian way, in recitative music and sceanes, much inferior to the Italian composure and magnificence; but it was prodigious that in a time of such publiq consternation such a vanity should be kept up or permitted. I being engaged with company, could not decently resist the going to see it, though my heart smote me for it."

With success Davenant grew bolder, and soon ventured to bring on the stage several new plays, which were well received. He imperceptibly introduced a style novel both in the language and the acting; he studied smoothness of diction, and what a succeeding age would have termed greater correctness in the structure of his compositions. The circumstances, too, under which he was compelled to produce his pieces, forced him to appeal to the eye and the ear more than to the imagination, and he was the first that exchanged the rude hanging for the illusory scene.

What he began, Dryden and others carried out to greater completion; and the public taste eventually became so changed, that Otway's "Caius Marius" displaced "Romeo and Juliet" for seventy years. For eighty years, Dryden's "All for Love" was performed instead of "Antony and Cleopatra;" and Davenant's alteration of "Macbeth" was preferred to the original for a like number of years. Dryden looked on this as the commencement of a new and more auspicious era for the English stage. "For myself," he observes, "and others who come after him we are bound with all veneration to his memory, to acknowledge what advantage we received from that excellent groundwork which he laid." But, as Hazlitt remarks, "Dryden had no dramatic genius, either in tragedy or comedy." He was unable to estimate correctly in what the great excellence of the Elizabethan writers consisted, nor did he discern the tendency or the causes of the literary revolution in which he was so conspicuous an actor. His appreciation, however, of the peculiar talents of his coadjutor shows both generosity and discernment. "I found him," says he, "of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him, on which he could not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of his, contrary to the old Latin proverb, were not always the least happy. And as his fancy was quick, so likewise were the products of it remote and new. He borrowed not of any other; and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man. His corrections were sober and judicious; and he corrected his own writings much more severely than those of another man, bestowing twice the time and labour in polishing which he used in invention."

Davenant's loyalty or restlessness brought him into further trouble during the commotions which took place previous to the Restoration. To use his own words, he

could not sit idle, and sigh with such as mourn to hear the drum. He became implicated in some way in the insurrection headed by Sir George Booth which extended over the counties of Cheshire and Lancashire, and was again consigned to a prison.

Whitelocke has the following entries :

"9 *Aug.* 1659.—A Proclamation past, declaring Sir George Booth and his adherents to be rebels and traitors.

"16.—Sir William Davenant was released out of prison."

So that his incarceration lasted but a few days. With the Restoration all political perils vanished, as well as the dangers that attended the exercise of his vocation.

To no class of men in England was that event more auspicious than to the persecuted actors. During the civil troubles they had been widely scattered, and but few of the old race remained. Some had sunk beneath the pressure of poverty and despair ; some had fought and fallen for their Sovereign with unflinching heroism ; some had been murdered in cold blood, by the pious enthusiasts who called that, "doing the work of the Lord." Those that survived had gradually gathered hope, new aspirants appeared, and soon a sufficient number was collected to constitute two efficient companies.

Rhodes, a bookseller, who had formerly been wardrobe-keeper to the Blackfriars Company, had got a small company together. But Killegrew and Davenant obtained the sole privilege of opening places for theatrical entertainments by the following grant, which passed the Privy Signet 21st of August, 1660.

"Charles II., by the grace of God, of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Fayth, &c., to all to whome these presents shall come, greeting. Whereas we are given to understand that certain persons

in and about our citty of London, or the suburbs thereof, doe frequently assemble for the performing and acting of playes, and enterludes for rewards, to which divers of our subjects doe for their entertainment resort; which said playes, as we are informed, doe containe much matter of profanation, and scurrility, soe that such kind of entertainments, which, if well managed, might serve as morall instructions in human life, as the same are now used, doe for the most part tend to the debauchinge of the manners of such as are present at them, and are very scandalous and offensive to all pious and well-disposed persons. We taking the premisses into our princely consideration, yett not holding it necessary totally to suppresse the use of theaters, because wee are assured, that, if the evill and scandall in the playes that now are or haue bin acted were taken away, the same might serve as innocent and harmlesse divertisement for many of our subjects; and hauing experience of the art and skill of our trusty and well-beloued Thomas Killegrew, Esq., one of the Groomes of our Bedchamber, and of Sir William Dauenant, knight, for the purposes hereafter mentioned, doe hereby giue and grante unto the said Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Dauenant, full power and authority to erect two companies of players, consistinge respectively of such persons as they shall chuse and appoint, and to purchase builde and erect, or hire at their charge, as they shall thinke fitt, two houses or theatres, with all convenient roomes and other necessaries thereunto appertaining for the representation of tragydies, comedyes, playes, operas, and all other entertainments of that nature, in convenient places: and likewise to settle and establish such payments to be paid by those that shall resort to see the said representations performed, as either haue bin accustomely giuen and taken in the like kind, or as shall be reasonable in regard of the great expences of scenes, musick, and such

new decorations as haue not been formerly used, with further power to make such allowances out of that which they shall so receive, to the actors, and other persons employed in the saide representations in both houses respectively, as they shall think fitt: the said companies to be under the government and authority of them the said Thomas Killegrew and Sir William Davenant. And in regard of the extraordinary licentiousness that hath been lately used in things of this nature, our pleasure is that there shall be no more places of representations, nor companies of actors or playes, or operas by recitative, or musick, or representations by dancing and scenes, or any other entertainments on the stage, in our citties of London or Westminster, or in the liberties of them, than the two to be now erected by vertue of this authority. Nevertheless, wee doe hereby by our authority royal, strictly enjoine the said Thomas Killegrew and Sir William Dauenant, that they do not at any time hereafter, cause to be acted or represented, any play, enterlude, or opera, containing any matter of prophanation, scurrility or obscenity. And wee doe further hereby authorise and command them the said Thomas Killegrew and Sir William Davenant to peruse all plays that have been formerly written, and to expunge all prophanesse and scurrility from the same, before they be represented or acted. And this our grant and authority, made to the said Thomas Killegrew and Sir William Davenant, shall be effectual and remaine in full force and virtue, notwithstanding any former order or direction by us given, for the suppressing of playhouses and playes, or any other entertainments of the stage. Given, &c.

"August 21, 1660."

The two companies were speedily organized, one by the title of the King's Servants; the other, under the patronage of the Duke of York, was called the Duke's Company.

Killegrew had the former, Sir William Davenant the latter. Killegrew occupied, first the "Red Bull," in St. John's Street; afterwards Gibbon's tennis-court, Vere Street, Clare-Market, and finally removed to the new Theatre Royal built for them in Drury Lane. Davenant, about March, 1662, established his company in a new theatre in Portugal Row, near Lincoln's Inn Fields; and it was under his management that Betterton, who had already a good reputation, gave evidence of his extraordinary powers. The first piece he reproduced here was his "Siege of Rhodes," and this play appears to have been the one in which the female parts were first performed by women; another important innovation some time before made in France and Italy, but for the adoption of which the stage in this country is indebted to the theatrical efforts of Davenant. In the patent granted to Davenant this year, the practice received the royal sanction, as the reader will perceive by the subjoined extract:

"And for as much as many plays, formerly acted, do contain several profane, obscene and scurrilous passages; and the women's parts therein have been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offence; for the preventing these abuses for the future, we do hereby strictly command and enjoin, that from henceforth no new play shall be acted by either of the said companies, containing any passages offensive to piety and good manners, nor any old or revived play, containing any such offensive passages as aforesaid, until the same shall be corrected and purged, by the said masters or governors of the said companies, from all such offensive and scandalous passages as aforesaid. And we do likewise permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies, for the time to come, may be performed by women, as long as these recreations

which, by reason of the abuses aforesaid, were scandalous and offensive, may, by such reformation, be esteemed not only harmless delights, but useful and instructive representations of human life, to such of our good subjects as shall resort to the same."

We are enabled to form some estimate of the profits of theatrical speculation at that period. The receipts were divided into fifteen shares, of which ten were allotted to Davenant. Of these, one was to provide dresses, scenery, &c., two were to be appropriated to the expenses of house-rent, buildings, &c., and the other seven to maintain the women, &c., and "in consideration of erecting and establishing his actors to be a company, and his pains and expenses for that purpose for many years." The remaining five shares were divided among the company; and Sir Henry Herbert tells us that Davenant drew from these ten shares £200 a week.

During the competition of the two companies for public favour, it was usual for each to secure the "taking" poets by a kind of retaining fee, which, according to Gildon, seldom or never amounted to more than forty shillings a week. There is a petition of Killegrew extant complaining, that although Dryden received his pay with exemplary regularity, he was not very punctual with his work: nay more, that "Mr. Dryden has now, jointly with Mr. Lee (who was in pension with us to the last day of our playing and shall continue), written a play called 'Œdipus,' and given it to the Duke's Company, contrary to his said agreement, his promise, and all gratitude; to the great prejudice and almost undoing of the company, they being the only poets remaining to us."

Davenant's success was so great that his theatre was too small for his audience, and he commenced building a new one in Dorset Gardens, near Dorset Stairs, which he did not live to see completed, but into which his com-

pany moved on November 9th, 1671, about three years after his death. The building stood fronting the river on the east side of Salisbury Court. It was taken down about 1730. He still retained his early partiality for Shakespeare, and displayed much ingenuity in bringing his pieces on the stage. "Romeo and Juliet" was not popular, so it was submitted to the amending hand of a fashionable author, who put it into a presentable shape, altered the catastrophe, and gave the drama a happy termination. The piece so improved was acceptable to the public, and had a run, and Davenant smuggled in the original by playing it on alternate nights with the more favoured modification by the Honourable James Howard. His efforts to divert the public diminished not with advancing years. "The Rivals," a comedy, "The Man's the Master," a comedy, "Macbeth," altered from Shakespeare, and "The Enchanted Island," an alteration of "The Tempest," in which he was assisted by Dryden, were produced in rapid succession. The troubles and vicissitudes of his life were over; a popular dramatist and a successful manager, the favourite alike of the Court and the people, he died in the full tide of popularity and success at his lodgings in Lincoln's Inn Fields, April 7th, 1668, aged sixty-three.

He was buried, two days afterwards, in the south transept of Westminster Abbey; his entire company attended to pay their last tribute to his remains, and on his gravestone were inscribed the words:

"O rare Sir William Davenant!"

It would be superfluous here to enter into any further examination of his character or abilities. While still young, he conceived a correct estimate of his own powers, found his proper place in life, and adhered to one definite purpose of action with a consistency and resolution, which

neither success nor adversity could weaken or overpower. He possessed invention, facility, an unrivalled sagacity in discerning the taste of the public, and tact in providing for its gratification. Hence, whether inventing for himself, or reconstructing the conceptions of others, he seldom failed of success; for he knew precisely what was wanted, and readily debased or refined his material to the required standard. Calling to his aid "the music of Italy and the scenery of France," he undertook to restore the English stage; but the dramatic, like the political restoration, was the commencement of a new era, rather than a revivification of the old existence. The spirit that brooded over our earlier stage was as hopelessly extinct as was the inner might and the pride that gave life to the dominion of the Tudor. The elder dramatist wrote for the stage, the more recent fitted his compositions to the stage. Each were exponents of the opinions, indices of the tastes of their respective times; but the former ruled as a master, and while reflecting and influenced by the changing phases of contemporary manners, moulded with plastic power the thoughts and opinions of his auditors, and dictated laws which they implicitly obeyed. The later dynasty meekly abnegated all independent action, content to give utterance to the popular feeling, and to register the ephemeral follies that swept across the surface of society. To investigate the causes of so fundamental a change, were to exceed the scope of this memoir. They intertwine with the springs of our political and social economy. Much vapid declamation has been expended on the degeneracy of the modern stage, but it requires no profound penetration to discover that its present condition is an unavoidable effect of our present state of civilization. Spasmodic efforts may be attempted at intervals to make it what it is not, but the influence it once possessed has passed from it for ever.

A reference to "Gondibert," his most cherished production, awakens some sensation of melancholy. This poem, he fondly hoped was to transmit his name as a household word to unborn generations of Englishmen. His plays were written for temporary purposes. They were the exercise of the vocation he had selected for his honour and sustentation through life; but in "Gondibert" he had indulged in higher aspirations, and had challenged the admiration of posterity. He would exalt virtue, teach future ages how to live, and fame should be his immortal reward.

"He who writes an heroic poem," says he, in his postscript to that work, "leaves an estate entailed, and he gives a greater gift to posterity than to the present age; for a public benefit is best measured in the number of receivers; and our contemporaries are but few when reckoned with those who shall succeed.

"If thou art a malicious reader, thou wilt remember my preface, boldly confessed, that a main motive to this undertaking was a desire of fame, and thou mayst likewise say, I may very possibly not live to enjoy it. Truly, I have some years ago considered that fame, like time, only gets a reverence by long running; and that, like a river, it is narrowest where it is bred, and broadest afar off; but this concludes it not unprofitable, for he whose writings divert men from indiscretion and vice, becomes famous, as he is an example to others' endeavours: and exemplary writers are wiser than to depend on the gratuities of this world, since the kind looks and praises of the present age, for reclaiming a few, are not mentionable with those solid rewards in Heaven for a long and continual conversion of posterity."

The dreary oblivion into which the work has fallen presents a touching comment on the vanity of all such enthusiastic anticipations. It has passed the ordeal of a

trying criticism, and the partial judgment of its admirers has been overruled by the irreversible decree of time and opinion. It has great beauties, scattered like gems, here and there along the surface; but the grave faults which pervade the whole composition, more than eclipse their lustre. The fable is languid, the subject of no striking interest, the metre tiresome and monotonous, and the soberness of style we require in an epic vitiated by the quaintness and abruptness, the writers of that age so universally affected. But it has fancy, imagery, enlarged views of life and science, and abounds with striking apophthegms and deep moral reflections, clothed in chaste and forcible language. We present the reader with the following extracts:

Of a court he says:

"There prosperous power sleeps long, though suitors wake."

Of care:

"She visits cities, but she dwells on thrones."

Of the pious man, he

"Served Heaven with praise, the world with prayer."

"The laws,
Men from themselves, but not from power, secure."

"If you approve what numbers lawful think,
Be bold, for numbers cancel bashfulness;
Extremes from which a King would blushing shrink,
Unblushing senates act as no excess."

Describing musical instruments, he says, all

"That joy did e'er invent, or breath inspired,
Or flying fingers touch'd into a voice."

Of a temple:

"This, to soothe Heaven, the bloody Clephes built,
As if Heaven's King so soft and easy were,
So meanly housed in heaven, and kind to guilt,
That he would be a tyrant's tenant here."

The library, which, in the House of Astragon, he places near the Cabinet of Death, he calls:

"The monument of vanished minds."

"Where they thought they saw
The assembled souls of all that men held wise."

Of law:

"In little tomes these grave first lawyers lie,
In volumes their interpreters below."

Of polemics:

"About this sacred little book did stand,
Unwieldy volumes, and in number great;
And long it was since any reader's hand
Had reach'd them from their unfrequented seat.

"For a deep dust (which Time does softly shed,
Where only time does come,) their covers bear,
On which grave spiders streets of webs had spread,
Subtle and slight, as the grave writers were.

"In these, Heaven's holy fire does vainly burn;
Nor warms, nor lights, but is in sparkles spent;
Where froward authors, with disputes have torn
The garment seamless as the firmament."

Of the instruction that the pages of Gondibert receive from their lord, he thus speaks:

"But with the early sun he rose, and taught
These youths by growing Virtue to grow great;
Show'd greatness is without it blindly sought,
A desperate charge which ends in base retreat.

"He taught them Shame, the sudden sense of ill;
Shame, nature's hasty conscience, which forbids
Weak inclination ere it grows to will,
Or stays rash will before it grows to deeds.

"He taught them Honour, virtue's bashfulness,
A fort so yieldless that it fears to treat;
Like power, it grows to nothing, growing less;
Honour, the moral conscience of the great.

"He taught them Kindness, soul's civility,
In which nor courts nor cities have a part;
For theirs is fashion, this from falsehood free,
Where love and pleasure know no lust nor art.

"He taught them love of Toil, Toil which does keep
Obstructions from the mind, and quench the blood;
Ease but belongs to us, like Sleep, and sleep,
Like Opium, is our med'cine, not our food."

We conclude our extracts by the following quatrain:

"Rich are the diligent, who can command
Time, nature's stock! and could his hour-glass fall,
Would, as for seed of stars, stoop for the sand,
And by incessant labour gather all!"

One incident in our poet's life deserves honourable mention. When imprisoned by the Parliament, as has been recorded, Milton is reported to have interceded for his release. The obligation was not unremembered. At the Restoration, that stern and unyielding apologist for regicide was in the most imminent danger. Davenant exerted all his great personal influence in his favour, and succeeded in securing his safety. This graceful and successful interposition in behalf of the immortal writer of "Paradise Lost," when all other claims to remembrance are forgotten, may still suffice to shelter from oblivion, and retain in men's affections, the name of Sir William Davenant.

# JOHN DRYDEN.

The life of Dryden has been given to the world by two of the greatest of English writers. The triumphs and sufferings of that literary career have been recorded by Dr. Johnson and Sir Walter Scott, and upon the genius and writings of this poet some of the best essays in the language have been penned.

In succeeding such biographers there can be but little to perform, and yet how difficult that little! What remains for us but to compile from their narratives a short memoir of the Laureate; and in doing so to avail ourselves of the few more recent materials that exist—to collect some scattered notices—and to add some criticism upon his genius and character?

It is trite to tell any well-informed reader that Dryden was satirist, dramatist, didactic poet, essayist, translator, controversialist, and critic; that he was the monarch of his own age, and the idol of the first men of the next; that his life is the history of half a century; and that he is at once the glory and the shame of our literature.

To classify the sons of genius has always been a difficult

task; but to him has been justly assigned the first place in the second rank of our poets. We dare not compare even his rich endowments with Shakespeare's almost omniscience of human character, and profound penetration into the mysteries of the human heart. Spenser must remain the Lord of Allegory. Still farther is Dryden removed from the celestial purity and holy grandeur of Milton. With the satirist and dramatist of the Restoration we cannot breathe the serene atmosphere of the Empyrean, listen to the voices of angel-visitants of Eden, climb the flaming battlements of the universe, or sit at the council-table of Heaven. It may be said of Dryden:

> "He was the Bard, who knew so well
> All the sweet windings of Apollo's shell;"

but however sweet the notes, however brilliant the execution, those strains will bear no comparison to the holy harmonies in which seems to have been echoed through all eternity the symphonious chorus of joy and rapture hymned by triumphant hierarchies on the morn of creation.

Without raising the question of the extent to which worth, moral or intellectual, be connected with birth, it may be remarked that Dryden was a man of what is called good family. His grandfather was a baronet. The poet was born in 1630, and his father Erasmus had no occasion on Scriptural ground to be ashamed to meet his enemy at the gates, for he had thirteen children besides John. Mr. Malone's industry has made some discoveries about some of them, but brought nothing very important to light. Perhaps the longevity of one was the most remarkable thing in connection with them. This was the sister who, in spite of her ancient lineage, stooped to marry a tobacconist, and lived to the age of ninety, surviving the poet twenty years.

It is said that the family were Anabaptists, but great doubt hangs over the question. The destruction of a parish register leaves us to mere conjecture on the subject, and induces us to remark that those records have been so carelessly kept, even in later times, that much valuable information is lost by the wanton negligence evinced in the custody of what are the title-deeds of the humbler classes of the community. There is no doubt that the poet's early opinions were tinged with Puritanism, and that he had some hopes of patronage and promotion while that party was in power. Tichmarsh was the place which lays claim to being the scene of his childish days. He was thence removed to Westminster, where he was placed on the foundation. This justly famous school was then under the management of Dr. Busby of flogging notoriety.

We find that, as in the case of Ben Jonson and Camden, at the same place of education, the friendship between master and pupil was strengthened by time. Dryden sent his sons to Westminster; and a letter, in which he wrote to the Doctor to complain of some harsh treatment which one of them had received, is most respectful in its language. It was here that he gave an early proof of his talents for versifying and translation, for he tells us in his preface to "Persius," that he had, when a boy at Westminster, translated the third satire, as a Thursday night's exercise, for the head master; and he adds that the Doctor was still probably in possession of that and others of his earliest poetical essays. They are now, at the school, justly proud of "glorious John" as an "Old Westminster," and his name is still shown carved on a desk in the shell form, it is said, by his own hand.

When the choice came, it fell to Dryden's lot to go up as scholar to Trinity, Cambridge, and not Christ Church, Oxford. What his feelings were at the time, we have no

power of ascertaining; but he doubtless afterwards regretted it, for in mentioning the two Universities in a prologue, he speaks with disparagement of his own, and of Oxford with affectionate admiration. At Cambridge, through some irregularities of conduct, he fell into disgrace. It is doubtful whether he was expelled or fled to avoid expulsion. Shadwell, after they quarrelled, reminding Dryden of the incident, avers that it was in consequence of Dryden's traducing a young nobleman, who was his contemporary at College. Mr. Malone has shown that he was confined to his College, and "put out of Commons for his disobedience to the Vice-Master, and his contumacy in taking the punishment inflicted on him." It is, however, a well-established fact, that he took his Bachelor's degree, but he then left, and the degree of M.A. was afterwards conferred on him, not by his University, but by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

After leaving Cambridge, he took up his abode in London, and, if Shadwell is to be trusted, was in very needy circumstances; lived in a lodging that had a window "no bigger than a pocket looking-glass, and dined at a threepenny ordinary, enough to starve a vacation tailor." He was, according to the account of a contemporary, very simply clad; and one of his sources of income was to write prefaces for Herringman, the bookseller. His interest lay entirely with the Puritan party. In 1658, on the death of Cromwell, he poured forth an elegy. Spratt, Waller, and other poets paid their tributes also, but Dryden's lines were good enough to create great expectations from future efforts of his Muse. This was the first poem that he published, except the well-known lines mentioned by Johnson on the death of Lord Hastings.

Sir Gilbert Pickering, a kinsman of Dryden, was an influential man, from whose patronage the young poet hoped much. The Restoration banished all such expec-

tations. Sir Gilbert had been one of the Judges who had condemned Charles I. to death. When Charles II. returned, the knight sought safety in obscurity and retired into private life. Dryden, therefore, had nothing to look to in this quarter, and so he paid his homage to the rising sun, and produced "Astrea Redux," and added a "Panegyric on his Sacred Majesty." He now seems to have determined on devoting himself to a literary life. The theatres, so long closed by the austerity of the Puritans, became popular places of amusement when the Merry Monarch was restored. He planned and wrote a portion of "The Duke of Guise," but was dissuaded from finishing it by the advice of some friends.

In the vindication of that play, which he published in the form of an appendix to it, he writes:

"In the year of his Majesty's happy return, the first play I undertook was 'The Duke of Guise,' as the fairest way which the act of indemnity had left of setting forth the rise of the late rebellion, and by exploding the villanies of it upon the stage, to caution posterity against the like errors."

The play was afterwards acted in 1682.

The first drama of Dryden's which was exhibited on the stage, was "The Wild Gallant," a comedy. It fully merits the depreciatory criticism of Pepys, who tells us that it was ill acted, and "so poor a thing as I never saw in my life, and so little answering the name that I could not, nor can tell at this time which was the Wild Gallant." It was patronised by Lady Castlemaine, to whom Dryden in consequence wrote some grateful verses, for which he has been ridiculed. It has the faults visible in many first attempts at humorous dramatic writing; and it has faults peculiar to the particular circumstances under which it was produced. Dryden had but little dramatic power, an assertion which can be proved by instances from almost

all his numerous plays, with scarcely an exception, and which is at once discoverable in this. The plot is weak, meagre, and ludicrously improbable. There are many smart things and broad and obvious jokes; but the *dramatis personæ* carry on contests of wit with each other, in which the action does not proceed. Its gross obscenity was doubtless owing much to the manners of the times; and how great the licence which prevailed is so well known to all acquainted with the history of those times, we need not enter upon the question. It is full, as most of the comedies of the next twenty years were, of constant allusions to the lowest vices, and the grossest sensuality.

In the words of Sir Walter Scott, "the licence of a rude age was then revived by a corrupted one." Dryden was much influenced by his own times, and had not the courage or independence to write what was moral, when it was not likely to satisfy the morbid craving of the public. The comedies now attempted by him and others were quite unlike those of the Elizabethan era. Though Jonson was much admired and occasionally played, yet the comedy of character was not the model of any of these dramatic writers, except Shadwell. They borrowed from the Spanish theatre, and aimed at intricacy of plot, sudden surprises, mistakes, disguises, and escapes.

"The Wild Gallant" was considered by Dryden himself as a failure; in the epilogue, he confesses that comedy is the most difficult kind of dramatic writing, though in his defence of his "Essay on Dramatic Poetry," written some years after, he makes some remarks which prove how low a view he took of his mission as a poet, and also the estimation in which he held his comic powers. "I confess," he writes, "my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live. If the humour of this be in low comedy, small accidents, and raillery, I will force my genius to obey

it, though with more reputation I could write in verse. I know I am not so fitted by nature to write comedy; I want that gaiety of humour which is required to it; my conversation is slow, dull, my humour saturnine and reserved. In short, I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company or make repartees; so that those who decry my comedies do me no injury, except it be in point of profit; reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend."

That he had changed his mind, and adopted a higher view of the poet's duties a few years before his death, we see in his preface to the comedy written by his son John, from which we quote an extract, for the sake of its contrast to the last. Speaking of his son, he says:

"If it shall please God to restore him to me, I may perhaps inform him better of the rules of writing; and if I am not partial, he has already shown that a genius is not wanting to him. All that I can reasonably fear is that the perpetual good success of ill plays may make him endeavour to please by writing worse, and by accommodating himself to the wretched capacity and liking of the present audience, from which Heaven defend any of my progeny. *A poet indeed must live by the many; but a good poet will make it his business to please only the few.*"

In the year in which his first comedy was exhibited he wrote his verses to Lord Chancellor Hyde on "New Year's Day," and his satire on the Dutch. The versification of both poems, though it is vastly below the perfection which afterwards he arrived at, shows a wonderful mastery of the heroic metre, which had hitherto, however beautiful the image or profound the thought it conveyed, for the most part been rough and halting. His next production for the stage was "The Rival Ladies," a tragi-comedy, which is superior to "The Wild Gallant," and which was tolerably successful.

He appears, about this period, to have made the acquaintance of Sir Robert Howard through Herringman, with whom Dryden lodged, and who was Sir Robert's publisher; and he and the aristocratic author joined in one of those literary partnerships which, especially in dramatic composition, have been so common. King Charles had, during his exile, contracted French tastes in poetry and music, as well as in other matters, and he possessed an especial regard for the use of rhyme on the stage. Dryden, anxious to merit the royal favour, joined Sir Robert in the production of "The Indian Queen," which was acted before his Majesty with great applause. Pepys, though he censures the rhyme as breaking the sense, admits that it was well acted, and that he and Mrs. P. came home from the theatre "mightily contented." Evelyn has spoken eulogistically of the grandeur of the scenic decoration.

Dryden soon followed it up by "The Indian Emperor," which is a continuation of the story, and forms a part of the plot of the former play. It would be superfluous here to pronounce any grave censure on what all critics have agreed to condemn. To us, accustomed to hear rhyming heroics made the vehicle of parody, burlesque, and bombast, in extravaganzas and travesties, it is difficult to imagine an audience either terror-stricken or melted into pity by sentiments conveyed in stilted heroics, tagged with rhymes. Where long descriptive passages occur, such a poet as Dryden could not but write poetry; but when the dialogue is short and broken, the effect of rhyme is peculiarly absurd.

In 1665, he wrote his lines "On the Victory over the Dutch." In this year the plague broke out, and was succeeded by the fire. The theatres were closed from May, 1665, to Christmas, 1666. Dryden's intimacy with Sir Robert Howard had increased, and he spent the greater

portion of this interval at Charlton, the seat of the Earl of Berkshire, Sir Robert's father. Here Dryden met, wooed, and married Lady Elizabeth, his friend's sister. There is no evidence to show in what light the family viewed the match. Lampoons written long after, dictated by the virulence of political hatred, asserted that the alliance took place under circumstances not very creditable to either party. As no proof whatever was adduced in support of these ill-natured statements, all his biographers have consented to discredit or overlook them. The slander may have been suggested by the seeming inequality in the circumstances of the two. But a moment's reflection will show that there was no vast disproportion between them. Dryden was of good and old, though not noble family. He had been educated at Westminster and Cambridge; his prospects had been excellent before the Restoration; and he had proved himself, by the verses he had published, and his successes on the stage, a man of genius and promise. As regards his personal qualifications, we need not wonder at Lady Elizabeth's choice, for if his portrait can be trusted, he must as a young man have possessed much manly beauty.

It was not his first passion. While at Cambridge, he had paid his addresses to his cousin, Honor Dryden, who was an heiress as well as a beauty. There is still remaining one love letter of his written to her from Cambridge. It is replete with figure and conceits, and with quite as much affectation, and not a tithe of the elegance of the early letters of Pope. She rejected him at the time; but lived to regret her obduracy, for she died single, and was very proud, when Dryden had become famous, to show the love letter he had written her from the University.

Previous to his marriage, he had also an amour with a pretty actress, Mrs. Reeves, who was for some time under

his protection. His marriage, in the words of Scott, "interrupted, if it did not terminate his gallantries." His domestic life does not appear to have been very happy; but no open fracas, as is the case of so many others of his brethren of the lyre, took place. A good supplement to the quarrels of authors would be the quarrels of authors with their wives.

At Charlton, Dryden, in addition to the love and matrimony, employed himself on the "Essay on Dramatic Poesy." This composition has justly acquired great fame. It forms an epoch in our literature, and is perhaps the first attempt at regular criticism. Ben Jonson's "Discoveries" had contained many observations on books, as well as men, displaying a critical power profound and philosophical, but this Essay is unique. In certain artistic effects, it is meant to imitate, and it strongly reminds us of "The Platonic Dialogue." The commencement, in which the speakers are represented as floating on the Thames together in their barge, and being drawn into the discussion by one accidental remark; the dramatic nature of the discussion; the manner in which, when it is concluded, they quit the barge at the foot of Somerset Stairs, and look back on the water upon which the moonbeams are playing; how they walked together to the Piazza, and then parted Eugenius and Lisideius to some pleasant appointment they had made, and Crites and Neander to their several lodgings; all impart to it something of the reality of the recorded conversations of Socrates with his disciples; but the nature of dialogue is not well preserved, for each of the disputants delivers his opinions at such length, that it reads more like a series of orations than a colloquy.

Though, from its beautiful style, its learning and grace, it is a charming production; it would be tedious to attempt, by an analysis, to follow all the intricacies of

argument which turn on the superiority of the ancients to the moderns, the question of the unities, and the propriety of rhyme in dramatic composition. Such topics criticism has long exhausted. The speakers represented under the classical names are Lord Dorset, Sir Charles Sedley, Sir Robert Howard, and Dryden himself. Sir Robert is represented under the name of Crites, and described as "a person of a sharp judgment, and somewhat too delicate in his taste, which the world hath mistaken in him for ill nature." He is put up in the dialogue to be knocked down. He first debates with Eugenius and Lisideius, and afterwards with Neander. The latter part of the dialogue turns on the propriety of rhyme in tragedy. Neander defends it, and Crites states certain objections which many years after Dryden would have approved. Indeed, on this point he is said to have so changed his opinion, that he stated that were he to begin his Virgil again he would write it in blank verse.

In his dedication of "The Rival Ladies" to the Earl of Orrery, Dryden enters into an elaborate defence of rhyme in tragedy. Either this Essay, or as it is by some asserted, Dryden's connection with him by a marriage which he had been the means of bringing about, gave Sir Robert offence; and in his preface to the Duke of Lerma, while bidding farewell to the stage, he makes an opportunity for assailing Dryden's sentiments on the question of rhyme. Dryden replied rather angrily in a defence of the Essay on Dramatic Poetry, and assailed his brother-in-law with great irony. In speaking of Sir Robert's writings, he says: "I cannot but give this testimony of his style, that it is extremely poetical, even in oratory, his thoughts elevated sometimes above common apprehension." Alluding to Sir Robert's abandoning dramatic poetry for state craft, he remarks: "The Muses have lost him, but the Commonwealth gains

by it; the corruption of a poet is the generation of a statesman."

Before, however, these literary hostilities took place, Dryden had concluded the poem of "Annus Mirabilis," on which he had been employed at Charlton, and published it with an almost blasphemous dedication to the City of London, and a critical letter to Sir R. Howard. This is certainly the best of his earliest poems, and produced for him far more fame as a poet than any which had preceded it. He thought highly of the subject, and expressed himself with some confidence on the manner in which he had treated it. He writes to Sir Robert: "I have chosen the most heroic subject which any poet could desire; I have taken upon me to describe the motives, the beginning, progress and successes of a most just and necessary war; in it the care, management and presence of a King; the conduct and valour of a royal admiral, and of two incomparable generals; the invincible courage of our captains and seamen, and their glorious victories, the result of all. After this," he adds, "I have in the fire the most deplorable but withal the greatest argument that can be imagined, the destruction being so swift, so sudden, so vast and miserable as nothing can parallel in story." He next boasts, though with some slight misgivings, of his accuracy in the use he had made of naval terms. It is difficult to see what can have induced him against all rules of criticism, to have introduced technicalities into poetry; Johnson has censured them; and Scott has agreed with him in condemning "the dialect of the dockyard." In speaking of his execution of the work, Dryden says: "And I am well satisfied, as they are incomparably the best subject I ever had, so also, that this I have written of them is much better than what I have performed on any other." Towards the conclusion, he defends himself against an accusation which had been

brought against the lines he had written to the Duchess of York in the previous year. "I know," he writes, "I addressed them to a lady, and accordingly I affected the softness of expression, and the smoothness of measure rather than the height of thought, and in what I did endeavour, it is no vanity to say I have succeeded. *I detest arrogance; but there is some difference betwixt that and a just defence.*" The fault of the measure in which "The Annus Mirabilis" is written, is that it breaks the sense. Though well tuned to Elegy in the hands of Gray, it is ill suited for a continuous narrative poem. Dr. Johnson has made one or two quotations to praise. Mr. Macaulay has done so to criticise and condemn. There are only two stanzas to which we would invite attention. The first has a pathos and simplicity not to be found elsewhere in the poem, which is rather to be admired for its strength and fire, than its sweetness.

"The careful husband had been long away,
Whom his chaste wife and little children mourn,
Who on their fingers learn to tell the day
On which their father promised to return."

The other is in a higher strain.

"Till now, alone the mighty nations strove,
The rest at gaze, without the lists did stand,
And thundering France, placed like a painted Jove,
Kept idle thunder in his lifted hand."

In 1667, "The Maiden Queen," a tragi-comedy, was given by Dryden to the stage, and was a favourite with Charles II.

He next revived, with alterations, "The Wild Gallant," which was now more successful than at its first representation.

It was after this that he and his predecessor in the laurel, Sir W. Davenant, set about the alteration of "The Tempest." The addition which they made to the plot of

Shakespeare is too well known to require any comment on it here. It appears that it was to Sir William's fertile fancy that we owe the counterpart of Shakespeare's Miranda in Antonio. Dryden tells us "that as he was a man of quick and piercing imagination, he soon found that somewhat might be added to the design of Shakespeare, of which neither Fletcher nor Suckling had ever thought. And, therefore, to put the last hand to it, he designed the counterpart of Shakespeare's plot, namely, that of a man who had never seen a woman; that by this means those two characters of Innocence and Love might the more illustrate and commend each other. *This excellent contrivance* he was pleased to communicate to me, and to desire my assistance in it. I confess that from the very first moment it so pleased me, that I never writ anything with more delight." He then proceeds to pay a tribute to the abilities of his coadjutor, which we have quoted in the Life of that Poet.

The remarks of Dryden which we have given above, speak plainly enough the taste of the age. It may be added, that at the end of the Preface, Dryden couples the name of Shakespeare and Sir W. Davenant almost as if equals. That with such an opinion of Shakespeare they were not likely to improve on him is probable enough, and Sir W. Scott has remarked with true severity, that "Miranda's simplicity is converted into indelicacy, and Dorinda talks the language of prostitution before she had even seen a man." It was brought out at the Duke's Theatre, and as the scenery was under the management of Sir W. Davenant, with a grandeur which we should now deem very simple, but which had at that time never before been witnessed on the stage. It was crowned with complete success.

His next dramatic composition was "Sir Martin Mar-all," an imitation of "L'Etourdi" of Molière. It

was highly successful, owing much to the comic talents of Nokes the actor, of whose playing in this piece Cibber has left us some account.

Next followed "Evening Love, or the Mock Astrologer." It was to see this play that Pepys tells us, "my wife and Deb went, thinking to spy me there, but did not." Pepys himself went on the afternoons of the 20th and 22nd, and pronounces it "very smutty, and nothing so good as 'The Maiden Queen' and 'The Indian Emperor.'" Evelyn condemns it more strongly, "as a foolish plot and very profane." "It affected me," he says, "to see how much the stage was degenerated and polluted by the licentious times." Herringman, the printer and publisher with whom we have before said Dryden once lodged, informed Pepys that Dryden himself admitted that this was but a fifth-rate play. Poor as it is, it has not even the praise of originality, for it is chiefly borrowed from a play of Corneille, who borrowed his from Calderon.

He next wrote "The Royal Martyr," which he dedicates to the Duke of Monmouth, in a preface in which he lauds the Duke's personal charms. "Youth, beauty, and courage (all which you possess in the height of their perfection), are the desirable gifts of Heaven; and Heaven is never prodigal of such treasures but to some uncommon purpose. So goodly a fabrick was never framed by an Almighty Architect for a vulgar guest. He shewed the value which he set upon your mind when he took care to have it so nobly and so beautifully lodged. To a graceful fashion and deportment of body you have joined a winning conversation, and an easy greatness derived to you from the best and best beloved of Princes. And with a great power of obliging, the world has observed in you a desire to oblige, even beyond your power. This, and all that I can say on so excellent and large a

subject, is only History; in which Fiction has no part; I can employ nothing of poetry in it, any more than I do in that humble protestation which I make to continue ever your Grace's most obedient and most devoted servant."

Dryden having now by his plays, poems, and prose writings acquired much popularity, produced those two very remarkable dramas, the first and second parts of "The Conquest of Granada." He prefaced them by an essay on heroic plays, in which he defends the stilted and bombastic style of these dramas, and endeavours to support his view by parallels from Homer, and criticisms from Horace. He concludes with a confident allusion to his success. "But I have already swept the stakes; and with the common good-fortune of prosperous gamesters, can be content to sit quietly; to hear my fortune cursed by some, and my faults arraigned by others; and to suffer both without reply." When he wrote this, he did not know that "The Rehearsal" was in preparation.

He was now in the zenith of his fame. Among noble friends and patrons, he numbered the Duke of Ormond, Lord Rochester, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Clifford, the Earl of Dorset and Sir Charles Sedley. It was at this time that he spent in noble society those convivial nights which he alludes to in the dedication of "The Assignation," when writing to Sir C. Sedley, and speaking of the Roman poets of the Augustine age, he says: "They imitated the best way of living, which was to pursue an innocent and inoffensive pleasure; that which one of the ancients called *Eruditam Voluptatem.* We have, like them, our genial nights; where our discourse is neither too serious nor too light; but always pleasant, and for the most part instructive: the raillery neither too sharp upon the present, nor too censorious on the absent; and the cups only such as will raise the

conversation of the night, without disturbing the business of the morrow." But his companions were not only among the great. He enjoyed the friendship of Cowley, Waller, Denham and Davenant. To Milton he was known but little, and Butler was the only wit of the day who was his enemy.

Fortune rains down all her favours on us at once, and so his income as well as his fame was at this time increased. When James Howell died, the office of royal historiographer became vacant, and it had not been filled up. It was now conferred on Dryden, together with the laureateship, which had not been bestowed since the death of Davenant. Dryden was appointed on the 18th of August, 1670. The salary of the two offices amounted to £200, with the annual butt of canary, and the grant bore a retrospect to the death of Davenant. The letters patent are to be seen in Scott's Life of the Poet. The office is said to be given "to John Dryden, Master of Arts, in consideration of his many acceptable services theretofore done to his present Majesty, and from an observation of his learning and eminent abilities, and his great skill and elegant style both in verse and prose." Scott computes that in this time Dryden's income derived from these appointments, as well as theatrical and literary sources, must have averaged between £600 and £700 per annum, equal in those days to an income of three times that amount now.

Dryden was not long destined to enjoy his wealth or fame uninterruptedly. His income was very soon somewhat curtailed by the burning down of the theatre, and enemies were rising up stimulated to hatred by envy and jealousy.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, had long strenuously opposed the rhyming tragedies, and had, in fact, risked his personal safety by attempting to interrupt one of the dramas of the Hon. Edward Howard, a brother

of Sir Robert. This gay and profligate nobleman gained the assistance of Butler, the author of "Hudibras," who, in Scott's words, "while himself starving, amused his misery by ridiculing his contemporaries,"—of Spratt, afterwards Bishop of Rochester, and of Martin Clifford, afterwards Master of the Charter-House. Their facetiæ were not meant at first to be levelled at Dryden personally; for Bilboa, the chief personage in this amusing farce, was first intended to represent Davenant and Sir Robert Howard. It was written in 1664, but not played till 1671; for the fire and plague for some time closed all the theatres, and Davenant's death obliged its author to remodel it, and put Dryden in his place.

The first night it was played, and a vehement opposition was attempted, Dryden and his friends, the Earl of Orrery, Sir Robert Howard, and others who had written in that style, were present, and clamorous enough against it. It was, however, in spite of all attempts to interrupt, triumphantly successful.

Parodies from almost every one of his plays must have tried Dryden's temper, but he bore it all with good-nature; and ultimately reaped an ample revenge when he elaborated the character of Zimri in his great political satire. After the effect produced by "The Rehearsal," Dryden did not immediately venture upon a heroic tragedy, but produced "Marriage-à-la-Mode," a tragi-comedy, which was highly successful. "The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery," was his next dramatic composition, and most deservedly failed. "Amboyna," his next drama, was written to excite the feelings of the nation against the Dutch. Scott most justly says of it, that "the story is too disgusting to produce the legitimate feelings of pity and terror which a tragedy should excite: the black-hole of Calcutta would be as pleasing a subject. The character of the Hollanders, as there represented, is too grossly vicious and detestable to give the least

pleasure. They are neither men, nor even devils, but a sort of *lubbar-fiends*, compounded of cruelty, avarice, and brutal debauchery; like Dutch swabbers possessed by demons."

Dryden next made a monstrous and ludicrous attempt to alter "Paradise Lost" into a five act drama, in rhyme. He has prefixed to it "an apology for heroic poetry and poetic licence," in which there is one passage which may to some slight extent make redemption for the audacity of the attempt. "I cannot," he writes, "without injury to the deceased author of 'Paradise Lost,' but acknowledge that this poem has received its entire foundation, part of the design, and many of the ornaments, from him. What I have borrowed will be so easily discerned from my own production, that I shall not need to point the reader to the places; and truly, I should be sorry for my own sake, that any one should take the pains to compare them together; *the original being undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems, that either this age or nation has produced.*"

This opera (for it is rather that than any other kind of play) stands in perhaps the same relation to "Paradise Lost" that the metrical versions of the Psalms do to the original, or a travestie of a Greek tragedy to the classic drama itself. Scott truly observes, that "Eve is somewhat of a coquette, even in the state of innocence, and the absurd expression, 'dissolved in hallelujahs,' provoked from a facetious critic a parody of 'anchovies dissolved in sauce.'" It is said that Dryden called on the aged poet, and asked his leave to make this monstrous alteration. He appears to have been either startled by this irreverent essay, or to have thought it expedient to abandon a style in which lesser wits bid fair to rival him; for his taste soon changed, and "Aurungzebe" was his last rhyming play.

It was at this time that his quarrel with Settle and Rochester took place. That jealous, fickle, and profligate nobleman at first patronized Dryden, then set up Settle, and afterwards Otway. Not content with having neglected Dryden, he took offence with him upon the false supposition that he had written all or the greater part of Lord Mulgrave's "Essay on Satire," in which Lord Rochester is attacked; and in a letter to a friend, he threatens the infamous revenge which he ultimately adopted. "You write me word," he says, "that I'm out of favour with a certain poet whom I have admired for the disproportion of him and his attributes. He is a rarity which I cannot but be fond of, as one would be of a hog that could fiddle, or a singing owl. If he falls on me at the blunt, which is his very good weapon in wit, I shall forgive him, if you please; and leave the repartee to Black Will with a cudgel." Accordingly, as Dryden was returning from Will's Coffee-house to his own house in Gerard Street, through Rose Street, Covent Garden, he was attacked and severely beaten by some dastardly ruffians who were doubtless the *employés* of Rochester. A reward of £50 was offered in the "London Gazette" for the discovery of his cowardly assailants, but to no purpose.

It was soon after the production of "Aurungzebe," that Dryden contemplated undertaking an epic poem, and hesitated in his choice of a subject between the story of King Arthur and Edward the Black Prince. He was wearied with wasting his powers on the stage, and he was anxious to build up some enduring monument of his genius by industry congenial to his taste. But this was impossible while he had to supply the wants of life by his pen. In his dedication of "Aurungzebe" to the Earl of Mulgrave, he complains that he wants patronage to help him in the effort. He informs him that the "*unsettledness* of his condition" had hitherto prevented his

making the attempt. "As," he writes, "I am no successor to Homer in his wit, so neither do I desire to be in his poverty. I can make no rhapsodies, nor go a begging at the Grecian doors, while I sing the praises of their ancestors. The times of Virgil please me better, because he had an Augustus for his Patron; and to draw the allegory nearer you, I am sure I shall not want a Mæcenas with him. 'Tis for your Lordship to stir up that remembrance in his Majesty, which his many avocations of business have caused him, I fear, to lay aside." But the patronage was not granted to him, and the subject which he would most probably have selected, was seized on and marred by Sir Richard Blackmore.

Since Dryden wrote "Aurungzebe," three years had elapsed, in which he had paid especial attention to the subject of versification, and made preparation for the work on English Prosody which he then contemplated writing. He, during this period, made Shakespeare his constant study, and this worked a most salutary change in his æsthetical and critical views. Notwithstanding, however, this revolution in his taste, he again set about what he had before attempted, an alteration of Shakespeare; but upon this occasion without a coadjutor, and with greater success. "All for Love, or the World well Lost," is an adaptation of "Antony and Cleopatra," and in some respects Dryden has improved it as an acting play. Sir W. Scott admits that, "in discarding a number of uninteresting characters, the plan of Dryden's play must unequivocally be preferred to that of Shakespeare in point of coherence, unity, and simplicity." But Sir Walter goes a step farther, in which we cannot follow him, and institutes a comparison, favourable to Dryden, between the two descriptions of the voyage of Cleopatra down the Cydnus.

But while Dryden had abandoned rhyme, and accepted Shakespeare as a model and an exemplar, his taste in comedy had not proportionately improved.

In the same year in which "All for Love" was played with the highest success, he wrote a comedy entitled "Limberham, or the Kind Keeper," which is his most stupid and most objectionable play. His object was, it appears, to attack "the crying sin of keeping." But the satire was unfortunately as gross or grosser than the vices it sought to denounce—the remedy was worse than the disease; and "Limberham," after having been scarcely tolerated for three nights, was driven off the stage. It certainly deserved no better fate, for it is one tissue of obscenity from first to last. Every man is an adulterer, every woman an adulteress, the whole plot turns on the grossest immorality, and the scenes are laid in places which it is not decent to name; there is not a grace of sentiment, or a pulse of love to disguise or elevate the indecent intrigues. It is full of *contretemps*, surprises and escapes; there are a few smart and laughable witticisms, but not the slightest success in the delineation of character. Dryden endeavours to defend it in the following plausible way: "The crime for which it suffered was that which is objected against the Satires of Juvenal and the Epigrams of Catullus, that it expressed too much of the vice which it decryed. Your Lordship knows what answer was returned by the elder of those Poets, whom I last mentioned, to his accusers:

> "'Castum esse decet pium Poetam
> Ipsum; versiculos nihil necesse est
> Qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem
> Si sint molliculi, et parum pudici.'"

There is, however, a vast distinction, to which self-love blinded Dryden, between the healthy and earnest coarseness of Juvenal or the wit of Catullus, and the profane pruriency

of this tiresome comedy. Dryden was not daunted by the failure of this piece; but with the assistance of Lee, soon after produced "Œdipus," and soon after alone fitted "Troilus and Cressida," which, as Scott remarks, was left by Shakespeare in a "state of strange imperfection," for the stage.

Soon after this he gave to the world his best comedy—"The Spanish Friar." It is his last dramatic composition, except "The Duke of Guise" and "The Masque of Albion and Albanius," which he produced before the Revolution; and it was meant to have a strong political influence. Dryden himself ascribed it to Lord Haughton, as a *Protestant* play to a *Protestant* patron. It was consequently the work to which, after Dryden's conversion to the Roman Catholic religion, contemptuous allusions were, by his enemies, constantly made. It is difficult to estimate what effect it produced at Court, except that we know that it so offended the Duke of York that, after his accession, he never permitted it to be played. To the King himself it may have been obnoxious, but at that time he had given power into the hands of the Protestant party, and Dryden had almost grown callous to Court favour, as he had neither been encouraged in his projected epic, nor even received his official salary of late. Lord Mulgrave also had fallen into disgrace, and the *protégé* had suffered with the patron. Dryden's income was therefore, at this period, far narrower than when we before spoke of it; for we have seen what plays he had written during a long interval, in which he had occupied himself solely with dramatic composition, and it is stated—we think with accuracy—that he never received more than a hundred pounds for any one play.

He was destined, however, for a time to leave the stage, and mixed up with the political passions of the day to add to our literature those satirical poems by which he has

immortalized his name, and which will, to the latest posterity, vindicate his genius, though his dramas be neglected and forgotten. Every reader will remember that just at this period of the poet's life there raged most fiercely the contest between the supporters of the Duke of York and the followers of Monmouth and Shaftesbury. It was an age of squibs, and all the rhyming talent, though it was only such as was possessed by Shadwell, Settle, and the like, was on the Whig side. Dryden, as Laureate, was expected to come to the rescue; and though he had of late been neglected by the Court, he was conciliated by kind words and fair promises. He was not wanting on the occasion, and in November, 1681, appeared the greatest satire in our language — "Absalom and Achitophel." Neither the plan or style of the poem were entirely new, but it is so vastly superior to the lucubrations which may have suggested it, that it does not require the praise of novelty to enhance its merits.

After the criticisms of Addison, Johnson, Sir W. Scott, and so many others, it is needless to enter into any discussion of its merits. A depreciatory and unfair criticism from a writer of eminence should perhaps here be quoted. No less a man than Schlegel, in his Lectures on Dramatic Poetry, makes the extraordinary assertion, that Dryden, "from his influence in fixing the laws of versification and poetical language, especially in rhyme, has acquired a reputation altogether disproportionate to his true merit." He ventures also to doubt "whether his translations of the Latin Poets are not manneristical paraphrases, and whether his political allegories (now that party-interest is dead) can be read without the greatest weariness."

It would appear from this, that even German industry cannot avail to save a man who attempts a vast subject in his teaching, from being occasionally shallow and unjust. If his charge against the translations have something of

truth in it, this depreciation of the satirical writings of Dryden becomes absurd, when it is remembered that no English classic is more read by all educated men; and that although a foreigner may find some difficulty in diverting himself with a poetical discussion of past English politics, or in comprehending satire clothed in allegory, the history of those times is too full of momentous interest to us, to permit our neglect of such a work as "Absalom and Achitophel," even supposing we were not attracted to it by the charms of wit and sarcasm expressed in a rich and melodious versification.

Whatever be now the verdict of German critics, the poem at the time answered the purpose for which it was intended with triumphant success. Dryden was soon again called on to succour the Court with his pen. The Whigs celebrated the release of Shaftesbury from the Tower by striking a medal with the rising sun upon it and the word "Lætamur." The King himself, upon this occasion, suggested the subject and the method of treatment to Dryden. "If I was a poet," said his Majesty, "and I think I am poor enough to be one, I would write a poem on such a subject;" and he went on to plan "the medal," and Dryden wrote it according to the royal instructions and received a hundred broad pieces as his reward.

These two poems, as might have been expected, provoked numerous violent satires and libels full of furious indignation from the other party. They are as endless as the titles are eccentric and abusive. One reverend controversialist having informed his readers, with much show of learning, that Achitophel in the original meant the brother of a fool, Dryden, who never missed an opportunity of showing his dislike to priests, said of him: "I half suspect he went no farther for his learning than the Index of Hebrew names and etymologies which is

printed at the end of some of our English Bibles. If Achitophel signify *the brother of a fool*, the author of that poem will pass with his readers for the next of kin; and perhaps it is the relation that makes the kindness. Whatever the verses are, buy them, I pray you, out of pity; for I hear the conventicle is shut up, and the brother of Achitophel out of service."

Dryden had waged hostilities with Settle. He was now brought into collision with Shadwell, with whom he had before been on seemingly good terms, in spite of some diversity of tastes. "MacFlecnoe," the bitterest personal invective that has ever been penned, was the result of this quarrel.

We shall say more of this contest in the life of that poet. Dryden spared him neither in verse or prose. On Shadwell's publishing "Reflections on the Pretended Parallel in the Play called 'The Duke of Guise,'" Dryden speaks of him thus: "Og may write against the King if he pleases, so long as he drinks for him, and his writings will never do the Government so much harm, as his drinking does it good; for true subjects will not be much perverted by his libels; but the wine-duties rise considerably by his claret. He has often called me an atheist in print; I would believe more charitably of him, and that he only goes the broad way, because the other is too narrow for him."

It was at this time that Dryden wrote his biographical preface to the translation of Plutarch's Lives, which then appeared, and translated at the King's request Maimbourg's "History of the League." He was also employed in writing "Albion and Albanius," to celebrate Charles's victory over the Whigs. When that monarch died, and James II. ascended the throne, Dryden immediately wrote his "Threnodia Augustalis," in which

he profusely panegyrized the late King and his successor. The death of Charles II. was lamented in almost as many poems as had hailed his restoration. On the melancholy event, verses Latin and English were copiously poured forth. Afra Behn among others, vented a Pindaric Ode. Dryden, who on other occasions has shown that the Poetry of Sorrow was not beyond his reach, failed lamentably when he bewailed the death of a Prince whom, while he hints that he had been a niggard patron, he yet overwhelms with epithets of praise. There has been a highly edifying controversy about the correctness of the use of the word "Augustalis." Doctors have disagreed, and we cannot decide, but the poem is as uninteresting as the dispute. It is a prosaic, frigid, and bombastic attempt to give a circumstantial account of the King's death. A perusal of it is intolerable after reading the perfect prose description of Mr. Macaulay. The best passage is that in which he describes Charles's patronage of the poets :

> "The officious Muses came along,
> A gay, harmonious quire, like angels, ever young."

But there is a lurking sarcasm in the lines

> "Though *little was their hire, and light their gain,*
> Yet somewhat to their share he threw,
> Fed from his hand, they sung and flew
> Like birds of Paradise, that lived on morning dew."

In contrast to these, we must quote one couplet more, which contains a very choice conceit:

> "Ere a Prince is to perfection brought
> He cost Omnipotence a second thought."

Before we read this, we had imagined that a vast number of kings had been made by "Nature's journeymen." Dryden also finished "Albion and Albanius," with

slight alterations, one addition being the apotheosis of the late King. It is an opera; and the music was composed by Monsieur Grabut, a Frenchman, who, in consequence of the rage which then existed for everything French, was preferred to Purcell. Its sixth representation was interrupted by the arrival of the news of the landing of Monmouth in the West; the audience immediately dispersed, and the play, which involved the theatre in a heavy loss for the expenses of dresses and scenery, was never revived.

It was soon after this that Dryden made that change of faith to which we have before alluded,* and which has been so lengthily discussed by almost all his biographers. It is an excellent opportunity for advocacy, and nothing is easier than to take a side. At the time he was, of course, welcomed as a sincere convert by his own party, and hooted at and called hard names by his opponents. His conversion, or perversion, Dr. Johnson and Sir W. Scott have, probably from political bias and a charitable sympathy with a man of genius, sought to palliate. Mr. Macaulay has, on the other hand, taken, we think, a more correct but severer view. It becomes, of course, a question of motive, and one, therefore, which it is simply impossible to settle. As Dr. Johnson, in speaking of it, observes: "Inquiries into the heart are not for man—we must now leave him to his Judge."

The circumstances under which he made the change are, as we have before said, most suspicious. James had turned a deaf ear to the sonorous panegyric in the "Threnodia Augustalis," with which Dryden had welcomed his accession. His return for it had been neglect, and to neglect he had added insult and injury, for with a niggard and sordid parsimony he had robbed him of the Tierce of Canary, granted in the letters patent.

* Life of Ben Jonson.

James did not care for poets at all, and a Protestant poet could sing nothing that could please him. So bigotted was he to his own creed, that mere political partizanship, however earnest or able, would not suffice. Nothing, therefore, remained for Dryden but to turn Papist; and he accordingly did so. This is the view expressed in language clearer and more forcible in Mr. Macaulay's "History of England."

By others, it is asserted that Dryden, at this particular time, was induced to read the controversy between the rival Churches, and that he was sincerely convinced by the Romish disputants, that his making this change at a moment when it was to his advantage, was a matter of accident rather than of design. Dr. Johnson states the case for Dryden with exquisite clearness and plausibility. "That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and as truth and interest are not, by any fatal necessity, at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was the then state of Popery. Every artifice was used to show it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive."

As has been observed, the most prominent characteristic of the man was his aversion to priests of all religions. The moment he broke away from the fetters of his early connection with Puritanism, he seems to have disliked that system, as a man who is a free-thinker must do. When he

joined the communion of the Church of Rome, he vented his dislike to the class upon such as Milbourne and others who attacked him. Indeed, when, at Pepys' suggestion, he versified the good Parson of Chaucer, it would seem that Dryden's contempt for the clergy of that day had some fair foundation; for Pepys, in a gossipping letter, in which he invites the poet to come and "partake of a cold chicken and a salad," thanks him for the exquisite paraphrase of Chaucer, "hoping," he adds, "from this your copy of the good Parson, some amends made me for the hourly offence I bear with from the sight of so many lewd originals."

From the earnestness and the beauty of the lines in which, in "The Hind and Panther," he has assigned the reason for his change of creed, we might be induced to believe that, like many men of late years, with intellects subtle and refined, and a conscientiousness morbidly sensitive, he had sought refuge from doubts and difficulties in the bosom of the Church which so boldly asserts its claim to infallibility; but we are bound to remember the character of the man, the character of the age in which he lived, the then intimate connection between religious and political parties, the advantages which he gained by taking that step, and lastly the suspicious vehemence with which the new convert became a violent controversialist. To quote against him some lines of his coadjutor Tate, from the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel:"

> "For renegadoes, who ne'er turn by halves,
> Are bound in conscience to be double knaves;
> So *this Prose-Prophet took most monstrous pains,*
> *To let his masters see he earn'd his gains.*"

So Dryden, in addition to "The Hind and Panther," which is one of the most beautiful pieces of reasoning in verse in any language, translated the life of St. Francis Xavier, and rushed into controversies with Stillingfleet, in which he was, of course, worsted.

His industrious advocacy of newly-adopted opinions was soon cut short by the flight of his Papist patron, King James, and the triumph of Protestantism in the accession of William and Mary. The laurel was stripped from his brow, and placed on that of his antagonist, Shadwell. We find him, therefore, again poor, and though not friendless, with many powerful enemies, and once more compelled to have recourse to the stage, which he so hated, to compensate the loss of income inflicted on him by "the glorious Revolution." In the preface to "Don Sebastian," the play which he now wrote, and which was not, as he tells us, "huddled up in haste," but carefully elaborated, he describes himself as "an author whose misfortunes have once more brought him on the stage," and adds: "While I continue in these bad circumstances (and truly I see very little probability of coming out), I must still be obliged to write; and if I may still hope for the same kind usage, I shall the less repent of that hard necessity."

"Don Sebastian," perhaps, take it all in all, is his best drama. It was not at first very successful; but after some alterations and curtailments, became an established favourite.

"Amphitryon" was next played with great applause, the opera of "King Arthur" followed; "Cleomenes" was "coldly received;" and his last play, "Love Triumphant," was, like his first, a failure. And so he made his exit from the boards.

We now find him a veteran *littérateur*, helped by the bounty of some generous friends and patrons, employing his two sons, Congreve, Creech, Tate and others, to translate under his direction; and meanwhile, political and religious hostility to him softening by time, exercising a dictatorship over the literary republic. As our space has precluded us from giving more than incidental criticisms

of some of his works, so it will not permit us to chronicle with precision the events of the last seven or eight years of his life. We must ask our readers to picture to themselves John Dryden as pre-eminently the first poet and greatest literary man of his era, spending his morning at his house in Gerard Street editing miscellanies for Tonson, translating Virgil, paraphrasing Chaucer and Bocaccio; and spending his afternoon at his club, where his chair was reserved for him by the fireside in winter, in summer in the balcony, and where, to a faithful band of admirers and disciples, he laid down the law on all questions of contemporaneous criticism. We should think of him in all the relations of life: as a husband, not as loving as he should have been, making long sojourns in the country while his wife was in town, and telling Lady Elizabeth, when she wished herself a book that she might enjoy more of his company, that he would prefer her being an almanack, that he might change her once a year. As a father, we find him writing to Busby about his boys at Westminster, remonstrating most respectfully with the flogging head-master about the treatment which one of the lads had received, writing a preface to the comedy of his son John, and corresponding most affectionately with them all.

His friends consisted of those persons of rank and fortune at whose country seats he translated an "Æneid," or wrote a preface, and of those literary associates and satellites who gathered round him at the Club. Here at Will's Coffee-house it was, that if he gave a rising young man a pinch from his snuff-box, the patronized aspirant was deemed to have taken a degree in literature and wit. Here it was that Southerne and Congreve spoke to him with confidence and familiarity, while Sir Henry Shere, Moyle, Motteaux, Walsh and Dennis did honour to him with a more distant deference. It was here that

Pope,* with boyish enthusiasm, gazed full of reverent admiration on the poet, who was at once his exemplar and his idol. It was probably here that Dryden, after he had read some of the bombastic and obscure Pindaric Odes, which the youthful genius had sent to him, told Swift, with great candour, what Swift never forgave, that he would never be a poet.

His relations to his publisher Tonson are worth a brief notice. Sometimes we find Dryden thanking him for his presents of fruit and wine, and writing to him about his snuff and sherry as Byron did to Murray about his tooth-powder. Then again he is quarrelling with Tonson, writing to him to accuse him of meanness and rapacity, abusing Tonson himself, and, among others, one Richard Bentley, who, as Dryden writes to Tonson, "has cursed our Virgil so heartily," and launching anathemas against the whole tribe of publishers. "Upon trial," he says, "I find all your trade are sharpers, and you not more than others; therefore, I have not wholly left you." There is also the rather well-known anecdote of our poet begging Lord Bolingbroke, who was calling on him to outstay Tonson: "I have not completed the sheet which I promised him," said Dryden to his Lordship, "and if you

* Pope, in writing to Wycherley, speaks of Dryden thus:—"I was not so happy as to know him: '*Virgilium tantum vidi.*' Had I been born early enough, I must have known and loved him; for I have been assured, not only by yourself, but by Mr. Congreve and Sir W. Trumbull, that his personal qualities were as amiable as his poetical, notwithstanding the many libellous misrepresentations of them, against which the former of these gentlemen has told me he will one day vindicate him. I suppose these injuries were begun by the violence of party, but it is no doubt they were continued by envy at his success and fame: and those scribblers who attacked him in his latter times, were only gnats in a summer's evening, which are never very troublesome but in the finest and most glorious season; for his fire, like the sun's, shined clearest towards its setting." In strange contrast to this, Gray, in one of his letters, writes:—"Dryden was as disgraceful to the office (of Laureate) from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses."

leave me unprotected, I shall suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

"It was probably," says Scott, "during the course of these bickerings with his publisher, that Dryden, incensed at some refusal of accommodation on the part of Tonson, sent him three well-known coarse and forcible satirical lines, descriptive of his personal appearance:

> "'With leering looks, bull faced, and freckled fair,
> With two left legs, and Judas colour'd hair,
> And frowzy pores, that taint the ambient air.'

"'Tell the dog,' said the poet to the messenger, 'that he who wrote these can write more.' But Tonson, perfectly satisfied with this single triplet, hastened to comply with the author's request, without requiring any further specimen of his poetical powers."

During these few years, though he was between the age of fifty and sixty, Dryden's intellect appears to have been in its greatest vigour. His was not that precocious genius which displays a promising blossom, and yields no fruit. One of his smallest successors has said of him in a couplet not, for Eusden, unusually limping:

> "Great Dryden did not early great appear,
> Faintly distinguished in his thirtieth year;"

and his sun having shone brightly in its meridian, set also in lustre. The account he gives of his faculties a few years before his death is interesting. In one of his letters he writes: "By the mercy of God I am already come within twenty years of his number (speaking of an old gentleman of fourscore and eight), a cripple in my limbs, but what decay is in my mind my readers must determine. I think myself as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul, excepting only my memory, which is not impaired to any great degree; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great reason to complain. What judgment I had increases rather than diminishes; and thoughts, such as

they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or reject, to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose. I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me."

In a letter to Mrs. Stewart, a painter and poetess of great personal attractions, after indulging in some very gallant observations, he gives a less confident account of his powers. He writes: "Madam, old men are not so insensible to beauty as it may be you young ladies think. For your part, I must needs acknowledge that your fair eyes had made me your slave before I received your fair presents. * * I am still dragging on, always a poet, and never a good one. I pass my time with Ovid, and sometimes with our old poet Chaucer, translating such stories as best please my fancy; and intend besides them to add some of my own, so that it is not impossible, but ere the summer be passed, I may come down to you with a volume in my hand, like a dog out of the water with a duck in his mouth."

All readers of his life will rejoice to find that if formerly what Mr. Hallam calls Dryden's "coarseness of mind" had induced him to make even Juvenal more gross, in the latest years of his life he repented of this, and endeavoured to make some amends for the fault. In his preface to the "Fables," after discussing the merits of Ovid, Bocaccio, Chaucer, and others, he makes an especial boast of having avoided Dan Chaucer's improprieties, and adds: "But I will no more offend against good manners. I am sensible, as I ought to be, of the scandal I have given by my loose writings; and make what reparation I am able, by this public acknowledgment."

It was at this period that he produced "Alexander's Feast," justly called by Mr. Macaulay the noblest ode in the language. We are sorry to find Mr. Hallam speaking

of it in the following terms: "Few lines are highly poetical, and some sink to the level of a drinking song. It has the defects, as well as the merits, of that poetry which is written for musical entertainment." It was very differently esteemed in Dryden's day, and we hope Mr. Hallam is in a minority now. Dryden himself writes to Tonson: "I am glad to hear from all hands that my Ode is esteemed the best of all my poetry by all the town. I thought so myself when I writ it; but being old, I mistrusted my own judgment." He went, it is said, on one occasion, even farther than this; for, on a young Templar* venturing at Will's Coffee-House to speak of its merit and success, Dryden replied: "You are right, young gentleman: a nobler ode never *was* produced, nor ever *will*." Here Sir Walter Scott, with wonted generosity and kindness of heart, remarks: "This singularly strong expression cannot be placed to the score of vanity. It was an inward consciousness of merit, which burst forth, probably almost involuntarily, and, I fear, must be admitted as prophetic." Take it as a whole, we cannot in ours, or perhaps in any literature, find its equal. We shall in Gray and Collins seek it in vain. The odes which in merit most nearly approach it are Coleridge's "On the Departed Year," and that sublime and magnificent poem of Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood." But they are so unlike, that it is impossible to compare them. Some inaccurate stories have been told of Dryden's finishing it at a sitting; and it is said that Lord Bolingbroke (then Mr. St. John) found him in the morning, trembling with agitation after the long vigil, and exhausted by the intellectual agony with which he had produced this splendid lyric. The probable state of the case, as his biographers have agreed, is, that while the fine frenzy of imagination was on him, he penned the rough draft, and

* The father of Lord Chief Justice Marlay. *See* Scott and Malone.

that it cost him more days to correct, than it did hours to compose. There is every reason to believe that Dryden, especially at this period, wrote with marvellous rapidity. It is the more likely, inasmuch as he was certainly "one of those writers in whom the period of imagination does not precede, but follow the period of observation and reflection."* Mr. Hallam, so cold and severe a critic on the ode we are speaking of, admits that Dryden had "rapidity of conception and readiness of expression. He never loiters about a single thought or image, never labours about the turn of a phrase. The impression upon our minds that he wrote with exceeding ease is irresistible, and I do not know that we have any evidence to repel it."

No wonder if his long practice in the heroic couplet had now made it his most natural utterance. In it he had written numerous tragedies, prologues, epilogues, satires, and didactic poems. No wonder that he translated Virgil in a far shorter time than Pope paraphrased Homer. It is to be regretted that Dryden did not seize on the Greek, and leave the Latin epic to his more refined and polished follower. In a letter he says of this very point: "My thoughts at present are fixed on Homer, and by my translation of the first 'Iliad,' I find him a poet more according to my genius than Virgil, and consequently hope I may do more justice to his more fiery way of writing, which as it is liable to some faults, so is it capable of more beauties, than the exactness and sobriety of Virgil."

But however vigorous were his mental powers, his bodily frame was now too much shattered for him to continue so vast an undertaking as an English version of Homer. He was also now busy with the "Fables," and was waging war with Blackmore, Milbourne and Collier. If ever

* Macaulay.

literary veteran died in harness, it was the lot of Dryden to do so. Within twenty days of his decease, he wrote a prologue and epilogue to Fletcher's comedy of "The Pilgrim," at that time revised by Vanbrugh, and played at the Drury Lane Theatre.

Though he had long suffered from chronic diseases, it was not directly from one of these that he died. A slight wound in the foot, neglected, became a gangrene. Amputation was advised; but Dryden would not consent, and mortification, as had been by the surgeon predicted, taking place, he died at three in the morning, on Wednesday, May 1st, 1700. Preserving his faculties almost to the very moment of his departure, he took an affectionate farewell of his friends and family, and died with calmness and resignation, a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

His friends were preparing a private funeral, when Lord Jeffries, Charles Montague, and other men of rank and fortune insisted upon his remains being honoured by public interment. The body was embalmed at Physicians' Hall, and lay in state there for twelve days, after which a Latin oration was pronounced over it by Dr. Garth. It was then carried with much pomp and ceremony to Westminster Abbey, and laid between the graves of Chaucer and Cowley.*

The reader must have gathered from this short memoir our view of the character of Dryden. But we may in a few words repeat it. The first fact of his nature is, that he was a man of great genius. The next, that he was a man of good heart. There is nothing deep or lofty in his moral being to command our reverence. We sorrow over his difficulties and trials, and rejoice in his prosperity,

* A false and ludicrous story about Dryden's funeral will be found in all Lives of the Poet. It is too well known to be related in so brief a sketch as this.

because we feel that his intellect and industry deserved success, and know that he was doomed to many of the sufferings which genius has so often endured. It is but fair also to remember that many of his faults were the faults of his age—that he was not more violent against antagonists than they against him, not more licentious in his writings than many of his contemporaries—and that the exaggerated flattery in his dedications was the fashion of the day. It is important also to remember the view which he himself took of this subject. In writing to the Earl of Rochester, he says: "Because I deal not in satire, I have sent your Lordship a prologue and epilogue which I made for our players when they went down to Oxford. I hear they have succeeded, and by the event your Lordship will judge *how easy 'tis to pass anything upon a University*, and how gross flattery the learned will endure."

Dr. Johnson did not suppose that Dryden ever laughed in his sleeve at the fine things he said to nobles as well as to learned bodies. He remarks: "Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastick homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention than mortified by the prostitution of his judgment. It is indeed not certain, that on these occasions his judgment much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank, and affluence of riches."

If Dryden unmercifully attacked some of his contemporaries, and called hard names, we must remember that courteous controversy was not then in fashion, and that he did not escape his share of rancorous abuse. Indeed, he was fully repaid in scurrility, though the wit was mostly

on his side of the question. And Dryden manifested much fun and good humour in his attacks on his most vehement enemies. We might instance some of his sarcasms against Shadwell, and we might add such a remark as the following on Shaftesbury: "I have not so much as an uncharitable wish against 'Achitophel,' but am content to be accused of a good-natured error, and to hope with Origen that the devil himself may at last be saved." It is strange to observe what a similarity there is between the calumnies which he and Pope provoked by their satiric vein. They were both arraigned as unsound in politics and religion, as mere versifiers, and accused of tricking their subscribers with bad translations of the two epics. They were both called apes, asses, frogs, cowards, knaves and fools.

The mention of Pope's name suggests a few brief observations on the points of comparison and contrast in their several writings. As far as their morality is concerned, if it be the duty of the satirist to attack vice and expose folly in the main, to make the bad his enemies rather than his enemies bad, we must assign to Pope a higher place than we can to Dryden. If, also, wit, irony, ridicule, be rather than indignant invective and earnest declamation the proper voice of satire, then too, on this ground, must we give to Pope the pre-eminence. Take almost any passages from their writings, and we shall find that such are their distinguishing characteristics as satirists. The satire of Pope, is a burnished Damascus blade. It glitters while it wounds, but the wound is incurable. Whereas that of Dryden is a huge mace, wielded with the strength of a giant, and sometimes raised to kill a dwarf.

In attempting to estimate the character and career of this Poet, must we not admit that there is neither in the one or the other anything sublime or noble to stir our enthusiasm or excite our love? We cannot dwell on his memory as we do on that of Shakespeare and of some of

Shakespeare's contemporaries. We cannot look back on him with the mingled exultation and sorrow which moves our hearts when we think of the blind prophet who uttered thoughts too pure and holy for a generation which knew him not, and in the midst of which he moved a stranger and a pilgrim.

On the page of the annals of letters the name of Dryden will stand as one of our greatest literary men—bold, brilliant, versatile, comprehensive—as one who aided our language in its development, and has given dignity, grace, and harmony to our versification. He was not one of those master spirits who enrich by their genius the thought of the world, and are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind." Still less to the satirist and dramatist of the Restoration, was

> "That sublimer inspiration given,
> Which glows in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page,
> The pomp and prodigality of Heaven."

## THOMAS SHADWELL.

Thomas Shadwell was a descendant of the younger branch of a Staffordshire family of great antiquity. He was born at the paternal seat, Santon Hall, in Norfolk, about 1640. His father had been a member of the Middle Temple, but having declined to compete for the more splendid prizes of the law, his ambition was satisfied with the performance of the lowlier, though important duties, connected with the local magistracy. He was in the commission of the peace for the counties of Middlesex, Norfolk and Suffolk. He espoused the side of the King during the times when loyalty was something more than lip-homage, and exhausted his patrimony through his devotion to the royal cause. The subject of this memoir was sent to Caius College, Cambridge, where his father had graduated before him, and afterwards to the Middle Temple, in the hope that his success at the bar might be a means of restoring the shattered fortunes of the house. Shadwell, however, felt little inclination to undergo the drudgery necessary for advancement in that most arduous of all the professions, and he deserted his law-books for others more congenial to his tastes. After a few years

spent at the Temple, he made the tour of the Continent, and on his return home became acquainted with several of the literary men of the day. His firsts attempts in verse were lamentably bad, and he never achieved any reputation as a poet; but he made the theatre his study, and first attracted attention by a comedy entitled "The Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinents." This piece, which was acted by the Duke of York's company, and printed in 1668, was, like most first productions, a mere reflex of the writer's peculiar studies. An extract from the preface will show the principle upon which it was put together, and the author he proposed as his model.

"I have endeavoured," he writes, "to represent variety of humours which was the practice of Ben Jonson, whom I think all dramatic poets ought to imitate, though none are like to come near, he being the only person that appears to me to have made perfect representations of human life. Most other authors in their lower comedies content themselves with one or two humours at most, and those not near so perfect characters as the admirable Jonson always made, who never wrote comedy without seven or eight excellent humours. I never saw one except that of Falstaff that was in my judgment comparable to any of Jonson's considerable humours."

His admiration of Jonson was excessive. In another place, he observes of him that "he was incomparably the best dramatic poet that ever was or I believe ever will be; and I had rather be author of one scene in his best comedies, than of any play this age has produced." In his epilogue to "The Humorists," he also writes of his favourite thus:

> "The mighty Prince of Poets, learned Ben,
> Who alone dived into the minds of men,
> Saw all their wand'rings, all their follies knew,
> And all their vain fantastic passions drew.
> * * * * *

'Twas he alone true humours understood,
And with great wit and judgment made them good."

And in the dedication prefixed to his play, "The Virtuoso," he explains humour to be "Such an affectation as misguides men in knowledge, art, or science, or that causes defection in manners or morality, or perverts their minds in the main actions of their lives."

Shadwell borrowed freely both from contemporary and preceding writers. The groundwork of "The Libertine," "The Miser," "Bury Fair," and "The Sullen Lovers," he took from Molière. "The Adelphi" of Terence gave him a hint for some passages in his "Squire of Alsatia," while he intimates that Shakespeare was under obligations to him for having first made a play of his "Timon of Athens." This hallucination respecting Shakespeare was common to authors, critics and the public of that time, and though indicating the immature or distorted taste that Shadwell had in common with his contemporaries, is no proof whatever, as has been alleged, of assurance or self-conceit.

His plays show great powers of observation, and make us well acquainted with the manners of his age. The public thought highly of them, and the Earl of Rochester, no bad critic, said:

"Of all our modern wits, none seem to me
Once to have touched upon true comedy,
But hasty Shadwell and slow Wycherley.
Shadwell's unfinish'd works do yet impart
Great proofs of force of genius, none of art,
With just bold strokes he dashes here and there,
Showing great mastery with little care."

But our dramatist had little skill in discerning the more hidden complexities, or in pourtraying the nicer shades of human character—he saw very little below the surface, though his method was based upon the right foundation. In this respect, he contrasts his own plan of writing with

that of his stately antagonist, Dryden, who, richly gifted as he was, was totally destitute of the dramatic faculty. Driven by pecuniary considerations to the exercise of a craft for which he had no aptitude, to cloak his own defects, he had extolled wit and sprightliness of expression, qualities in which he excelled, above the more laboured attempt of depicting character; and some slight sparring on this topic appears to have been the commencement of that fierce antagonism which the malevolence of satire has gibbeted to undying remembrance.

One misfortune of "hasty" Shadwell was his facility. His tragedy of "Psyche" was written in five weeks, and some of his plays in less than a month. We are involuntarily reminded of a *bon-mot* of Sheridan, "that easy writing is —— hard reading;" and tragedies dashed off at a heat are not likely to take any permanent hold on the public mind. He wrote altogether seventeen plays; and of his poetical works, the principal are a complimentary poem on the arrival of King William III., one on Queen Mary, and a translation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. Much time has been spent in the attempt to exhume these pieces from the public libraries of the metropolis, but without success; and if they yet slumber there, it would still be a thankless office to invade their dusty repose.

The following is a list of his plays:

"The Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinents." A comedy acted at the Duke's Theatre, and dedicated to the Duke of Newcastle. The plot taken from Molière's play, "Les Fâcheux."

"The Humorists." A comedy attacking the follies of the time. This play met with some opposition on its first appearance.

"The Royal Shepherdess." A tragi-comedy printed in 1669—an adaptation, by Shadwell, of a play written by a person of the name of Fountain, in the time of Charles II.,

called "The Reward of Virtue." It was never acted until this adoption and alteration by Shadwell. Pepys witnessed its performance, and had no very high opinion of its merits, as the reader will perceive by the following extract from his "Diary:"

"25 Feb., 1669.—To the Duke of York's house, and there before one, but the house infinite full, where, by-and-bye, the King and Court come, it being a new play, or an old one new vamp'd by Shadwell, call'd 'The Royall Shepherdesse,' but the silliest for words and design and everything else that I ever saw in my whole life, there being nothing in the world pleasing in it but a good martiall dance of pikemen, where Harris and another do handle their pikes in a dance to admiration; but I was never less satisfied with a play in my life."

"The Virtuoso," a comedy dedicated to the Duke of Newcastle, and printed in London, 1676. Gerard Langbaine observes of this play, that no one will deny it its due applause, as the University of Oxford, who, he says, may be allowed to be competent judges of comedy, had signified their approval of it.

"Psyche," acted at the Duke's Theatre, and dedicated to the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth. This met with much disfavour, and was Shadwell's first attempt at a rhyming play. In it, he borrowed largely from the French "Psyche" and Apuleius' "Asinus Aureus."

"The Libertine," a tragedy printed in 1676, and dedicated to the Duke of Newcastle. This has been regarded as one of his best plays. Music and poetry have since exhausted their resources in giving immortality to the worthless character, the hero of this piece, whom all Europe is intimate with as Don John, Don Giovanni, or Don Juan. In the preface, he says: "The story from which I took the hint of this play is famous all over Spain, Italy, and France. It was first put into a Spanish

play, as I have been told, the Spaniards having a tradition (which they believe) of such a vicious Spaniard as is represented in this play. From them the Italian comedians took it, and from them, the French; and four several French plays were made upon the story.

"I hope the readers will excuse the irregularities of the play, when they consider the extravagance of the subject forced me to it. I have been told by a worthy gentleman, when first a play was made upon this story in Italy, he had seen it acted there by the name of 'Ateista Fulminato,' in churches on Sundays, as a part of devotion; and some, not of the least judgment and piety here, have thought it rather a useful moral than an encouragement of vice."

What must be our idea of the purity of that religion or the morality of that system which can countenance the performance of "Don Juan" in church on Sunday as a part of devotion? We present the reader with a few of the *dramatis personæ* of this portion of the Papal Church Service:

Don John. The Libertine, a rash, fearless man, guilty of all vice.
Leonora. Don John's mistress, abused by him, and yet follows him for love.
Maria. Abused by Don John, and following him for revenge.
Six women, all wives to Don John, &c.

Later in the preface we are told that the town was not unkind to it, and then follows a flourish about the rapidity with which it was written. "There being no act in it," says Shadwell, "which cost me above five days' writing, and the last two, the playhouse having great occasion for a play, were both written in four days, as several can testify." There is no more merit in quick writing than in quick digestion, and this parade of facility only sinks the author in our esteem, as it is either an affectation or a falsehood. Labour is the necessary condition of excellence,

and the greatest master-pieces in every department of art or science have been the result of the most toilsome study. Much, however, depends on an author's habit of composition. Some writers put on paper every thought as it originates; others, without any mechanical aid, select and combine in their own minds, and there compose the independent whole; so that the act of writing is the mere transcription of what has already been carefully elaborated.

"Epsom Wells," a comedy, was printed in London in 1676, and dedicated to the Duke of Newcastle. This play won the praise of St. Evremont, and Shadwell tells us he was more fond of it than of any he ever wrote.

"The History of Timon of Athens, the Man-hater." In the dedication of this play to the Duke of Buckingham, Shadwell writes: "It has the inimitable hand of Shakespeare in it, which never made more masterly strokes than in this. Yet I can truly say I have made it into a play."

"The Miser," taken from Molière's "Avâre," and dedicated to the Earl of Dorset.

"A True Widow." A comedy, dedicated to Sir Charles Sedley, and which had the benefit of his correction. The prologue to this play was written by Dryden.

"The Lancashire Witches, and Teague O'Divelly the Irish Priest." A partizan production, which excited some opposition.

"The Woman Captain," dedicated to Lord Ogle, son of the Duke of Newcastle.

"The Squire of Alsatia." A comedy, founded on "The Adelphi" of Terence, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset.

"Bury Fair," dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, and founded partly on the Duke of Newcastle's "Triumphant Widow," partly on Molière's "Précieuses Ridicules."

"The Amorous Bigot," with the Second Part of "Teague O'Divelly," dedicated to the Earl of Shrewsbury.

"The Scourers," borrowed in part from a play of Sir George Etheredge.

"The Volunteers, or the Stock-Jobbers." A comedy, dedicated by his widow to the Queen.

Shadwell is now principally remembered as the antagonist of Dryden, and the consequent object of some of the most bitter satire in the English language. He was to the author of "MacFlecnoe" what Cibber was to Pope. In both cases the quarrel arose, as far as we can judge, from the most insignificant causes; a heedless piece of satire, or a momentary qualm of jealousy, which gradually strengthened into disgust, and was inflamed by opposition into the most rancorous hostility; while in Dryden's case "political hatred gangrened a wound inflicted by literary rivalry."

Now the actors are dust, how petty to us appear those fierce contentions which once formed a prominent topic of popular interest. Dryden and Shadwell; Pope and Cibber; Bentley and Boyle; the list might be indefinitely multiplied. The struggle, which, when some great principle of politics or morals is the subject of the strife, ennobles in our eyes the unflinching combatants, only degrades when the violence and the rancour result from the soreness of wounded vanity, or the malice of blighted anticipation. Infinitely grander in this respect stands out the character of Sir Walter Scott, who envied not the success of contemporaries, nor slighted rising talent, nor heeded attacks forgotten now because then unheeded, nor handled the weapon of satire, which is as dangerous to the offended as the offender.

Dryden and Shadwell were once on friendly terms, as, in 1676, in the preface to "The Humorists," the former

is thus alluded to. "And here I must make a little digression, and take liberty to dissent from my particular friend, for whom I have a very great respect, and whose writings I extremely admire; and though I will not say his is the best way of writing, yet I am sure his manner of writing is much the best that ever was." They had even joined in worrying a brother of the craft, Elkanah Settle, the last Poet-Laureate to the city of London, and author of "A Panegyric on the Loyal and Honourable Sir George Jefferies, Lord Chief Justice of England, 1633." But the bond of union was frail, they had little in common in their literary tastes, and in politics they stood in direct opposition to each other. In the prologue to "The Virtuoso," Shadwell glanced at the "Aurungzebe," of Dryden, which had been acted with success that season; and in the dedication, dated 26th June, 1676, in a sneering allusion to Dryden's pension, he says: "Had I as much money and as much time for it, I might perhaps write as correct a comedy as any of my contemporaries."

However, two years afterwards, we find Dryden writing an epilogue for Shadwell's play of "The True Widow," so that the mighty war smouldered long before it burst forth into a blaze. Shadwell's political spleen prompted him to write "The Lancashire Witches," intended to throw ridicule on the Tory party, and he fiercely attacked "The Medal," a satire of Dryden's, published in 1681, on the notorious Shaftesbury. He was likewise concerned in the attack on "The Duke of Guise," in 1683; and Dryden, in his vindication of that play, mentions that Shadwell had repeatedly called him atheist in print. The poet, irritated almost to madness by the unceasing attacks that were made upon him from all quarters, at length singled out Shadwell from the host of his assailants, and poured on his head the full vial of his wrath. He launched into the world two satires, each published within a month of the

other; first, the "MacFlecnoe," filling originally only a sheet and a half, and sold for two-pence, in which he ridiculed the poetical character of his victim; while as Og, in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel," Shadwell's abilities as a political writer are held up for perpetual reprobation.

The literary quarrels of those times were waged with an *animus*, and were attended with effects which in our day we find it hard to credit. Hunt, who assisted Shadwell in his attack on "The Duke of Guise," was obliged to fly the country; while the latter, in the dedication of his "Bury Fair" to the Earl of Dorset, refers to "those worst of times, when his ruin was designed and his life was sought, and for near ten years he was kept from the exercise of that profession which had afforded him a competent subsistence."

Dryden, the greatest of the poets who have worn the laurel, was the only one who was forcibly deprived of it, when the Revolution of 1688 transferred it to the brows of Shadwell. On its being represented to the Earl of Dorset, through whose influence the appointment, as well as that of historiographer was conferred, that there were other authors whose merits better entitled them to the honour; that discriminating nobleman replied that "he did not pretend to determine how great a poet Shadwell might be, but was sure he was an honest man;" honesty being then literally synonymous with Whiggism. Even with this justification, the appointment was hardly fair, as if such was the qualification for the office, there were many men in Church and State who had shown more zealotry in the cause even than Shadwell. He did not long enjoy his honours, as he died suddenly at Chelsea, in November, 1692, in the fifty-second year of his age. The report that his death was caused by an over-dose of laudanum, was authoritatively contradicted by Brady, who preached his funeral sermon.

He was corpulent and unwieldy in person, addicted to sensual indulgence, a boon companion, and a clever conversationalist. Lord Rochester said that "if Shadwell had burnt all he wrote, and printed all he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet." His plays denote much observation of life, quickness in perceiving foibles, and skill in depicting them, the characters are well sustained, and they will even now amuse in the perusal.

Brady, in his funeral panegyric says of him, that "he was a man of great honesty and integrity, and inviolable fidelity and strictness in his word; an unalterable friendship wherever he professed it, and however the world might be mistaken in him, he had a much deeper sense of religion than many who pretended more to it. His natural and acquired abilities made him very amiable to all who conversed with him, a very few being equal in the becoming qualities which adorn and set off a complete gentleman: his very enemies, if he has now any left, will give him this character, at least if they knew him so thoroughly as I did."

We will conclude this memoir with the following extracts from the satires of Dryden; and the reverse of the medal from the epilogue to Shadwell's play of "The Volunteers," which came out after his death, leaving to the reader the task of adjusting the due proportions of blame and praise; premising, however, that all the talent is exerted in deepening the lines of the unfavourable side.

Flecnoe addressing Shadwell, says:

"Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone of all my sons is he,
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity,
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense;

Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.

"But let no alien Sedley interpose,
To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.

"Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part—
What share have we in nature or in art?
When did his muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
As thou whole Etheridge dost transfuse to thine?
But so transfused, as oil and waters flow,
His always floats above, thine sinks below.

"A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,
But sure thou'rt but a kilderkin of wit;
Like mine, thy gentle members feebly creep,
Thy tragic muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep."

In the person of Og, Shadwell's political merits are descanted upon.

"Now stop your noses, readers, all and some,
For here's a tun of midnight work to come,
Og from a treason-tavern rolling home.
When wine has given him courage to blaspheme,
He curses God, but God before cursed him;
And if man could have reason, none has more
That made his paunch so rich, and him so poor.

"But though Heaven made him poor, with reverence speaking,
He never was a poet of God's making.
The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,
With this prophetic blessing:—Be thou dull.
Drink, swear, and roar: forbear no lewd delight
Fit for thy bulk—do anything but write.
Eat opium, mingle arsenic with thy drink,
Still thou may'st live, avoiding pen and ink.
I see, I see, 'tis counsel given in vain,
For treason, botched in rhyme, may be thy bane.
Rhyme is the rock on which thou art to wreck,
'Tis fatal to thy fame and to thy neck.

"A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull,
For writing treason, and for writing dull.
To die for faction is a common evil,
But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.

"I will not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes?
But of King David's foes be this the doom,
May all be like the young man, Absalom.*
And for my foes, may this their blessing be,
To talk like Doeg,† and to write like thee."

The following is an extract from the Epilogue.

"Shadwell, the great support o' the comic stage,
Born to expose the follies of the age.
To whip prevailing vices, and unite
Mirth with Instruction, Profit with Delight.
For large ideas and a flowing pen,
First of our times, and second but to Ben.
Shadwell, who all his lines from Nature drew,
Copied her out and kept her still in view;
Who ne'er was bribed by Title or Estate,
To fawn and flatter with the Rich and Great.
To let a gilded vice or folly pass,
But always lash'd the villain and the ass.

"Crown you his last performance with applause,
Who love like him our liberties and laws.
Let but the 'honest' party do him right,
And their loud claps shall give him fame, in spite
Of the faint hiss of grumbling Jacobite."

* The Duke of Monmouth. † Settle.

## NAHUM TATE.

It is amusing, if not edifying, to observe the manner in which all works of general reference, save a very few, repeat in regular succession the idlest inventions, and the clumsiest distortions of fact. In literary history this is especially the case, and we can trace in dictionary after dictionary, life after life, note upon note, some blunder copied with slight variations by book-makers, who lacked the honest industry to investigate, or the ingenuity to detect falsehood.

So because Tate was put into the "Dunciad," and Warburton sought to crush him, he has ever since been treated as a malefactor and impostor. In "The Pictorial History of England" he is described as "the author of the worst alteration of Shakespeare, the worst version of the Psalms of David, and the worst continuation of a great poem." Now it nevertheless does so happen, that his alteration of "King Lear" kept possession of the stage for nearly a century, and that Dr. Johnson admits that when an attempt was made to play the tragedy as Shakespeare wrote it, the public decided in favour of Tate; that in

seeking to dwarf the sublimity of Hebrew poetry by English rhyme and metre, he has only failed where every one else has done so; that his Version of the Psalms has for more than a hundred and fifty years been used in our Churches; that it was in itself no small thing to be Dryden's coadjutor; and that the parts of the continuation contributed by Tate have such merit, that Sir Walter Scott, not prone to be charitable towards him, is compelled to conjecture that they underwent the revision of Dryden.

He was doubtless only a second-rate man; but does he deserve to be damned in one sentence as a tenth-rate scribbler by those who very probably have read but a small portion of his works? In another compilation,* full of inaccuracies, he is assailed with acrimony, and treated with contempt. That he was the friend of Dryden, the *protégé* of Dorset, and Laureate for a quarter of a century, even those writers so hasty and indiscriminate in their censures will not deny. We may perhaps show that, however extravagant in tragedy, he was as a dramatist tolerably successful in comedy, farce, and opera; that he has done some good service as an English Psalmodist, and that he is not utterly unworthy of a brief, if not a eulogistic memoir.

Nahum Tate's grandfather and father were both clergymen. It is to be regretted that he did not adopt the hereditary profession. Coleridge† has declared that all literary men should have some source of income besides the pen; and there is no lack of instances to show that first as well as second-rate men of letters may live and die in indigence; and that in one age refuge may be sought in the Mint, in another in the Insolvent Court. His father, Dr. Faithful Teat, (for in this way was the name spelled until Tate adopted the English orthography of the Irish mal-pronunciation) was minister of Ballyhays. He

* Lives of English Dramatists. Lardner's Encyclopædia.

† Biog. Liter.

was educated at Winchester, but expelled from that school; and became the author of some poems and theological works. During some disturbances in Ireland, he gave information against a party of rebels, who wreaked their vengeance by robbing him on his way to Dublin; while a part of the gang simultaneously plundered his house, and treated his family with such severity that three of his children died from the cruelties inflicted on them. After residing some time in the lodgings of the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, he was appointed to preferment in Kent, but finally returned to Dublin. He is supposed to have been inclined to Puritanical opinions; but the surmise may have arisen from the fact of his giving his children (which was the fashion with this party) scriptural names.

Nahum was born at Dublin in 1652. He was for some time at Belfast under the tuition of a master whose name was Savage, and he matriculated at the age of sixteen, at Trinity College, Dublin. Of his university career nothing whatever is known. He appears to have determined on not adopting a profession, and came up to London to seek his fortune as a literary man. He was so fortunate as to gain the friendship of Dryden and the patronage of Dorset. His earliest production was a volume of poems in 1677. It consists of a great many verses on subjects the most heterogeneous. One composition laments "the present corrupted state of Poetry," and is, doubtlessly, a striking example of the decay of which it complains. There are some erotic lays replete with the quaintest and most elaborate conceits. The last stanza of a poem called "The Tear," reminds us, of (but we must not compare it with) Mr. Rogers' simple and beautiful lines on the same subject. Tate's are:

> "It shall be so. I will convert
> This tear to a gem—tis feasible;
> For laid near Julia's frozen heart

'Twill to a diamond congeal;
And yet, if I consider well,
These tears of Julia can forbode no ill—
The frost is breaking, when such drops distil."

But the booksellers who catered for the taste of the small reading public of that day did not remunerate our poet very liberally for these effusions; so he betook himself, at once, to the stage, then the best source of income to authors.

His first production was "Brutus of Alba, or the Enchanted Lovers," a tragedy. It was dedicated to the Earl of Dorset with the usual amount of flattery, and the poet tells his patron that to lay this tragedy at his feet transports him more than the greatest success on the stage could have done. The play was originally to have been called "Dido and Æneas," but Tate with much modesty feared to attempt "any character drawn by the incomparable Virgil." The plot is founded on an old story told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who gives the descent of the Welsh Princes from Brutus the Trojan. This Brutus, according to him, came from Troy to Albion, killed a race of giants who occupied this country, and then built London. Tate applies the incidents of the fourth book of the Æneid to this fabulous hero; and as it is his first and most original drama, the reader may be amused by a short account of the plot, which is interesting from its daring absurdities. The scene is laid at Syracuse. Brutus, Prince of the Dardan forces, has been cast by a storm on the shore of Sicily. He is brought into the presence of the Queen of Syracuse, who at once falls hopelessly in love with him. With him is his son Locrinus, who signalizes himself by slaying in a quarrel a young Syracusan, the son of Soziman. Brutus, with much magnanimity, gives up his son to justice; but upon the youth

explaining to her Majesty that he was entirely in the right, and the dead man entirely in the wrong, she instantly pardons him, and makes Soziman, who is described as a designing lord, her secret enemy. Brutus is so much distracted with grief for the loss of his friend Assaracus, who has on his voyage suffered shipwreck, that he cannot at first reciprocate the royal regard. Meanwhile, two ambassadors arrive from Agrigentum to demand the Queen in marriage for their lord and master, offering the alternative of war in case of a refusal. Her Majesty valorously and haughtily spurns the proposal. Soziman, however, resolves in a soliloquy that the tyrant of Agrigentum shall have the Queen's person while he allots to himself the sceptre of Syracuse. In the midst of all this, the lost friend, Assaracus, arrives. Brutus is in ecstasies of joy. Then ensues a tender scene between the Queen and her confidante Amarante, in which the royal lady confesses the soft impeachment of being over head and ears in love with Brutus. So ends Act I.

In Act II., the Agrigentine ambassadors and Soziman intrigue, and a plan is arranged by which Soziman is to be put in possession of the throne of Syracuse, on the condition of the Queen being delivered up into the hands of the King of Agrigentum. Meanwhile, her charms have won her another lover in Assaracus, who declares his passion in a very rough and blustering style, informing her that he has been so unfortunate as to have become enamoured of her, that he is very sorry for it, and hopes she will in no way encourage his advances. She replies that she will endeavour to be as reserved as he wishes, but confesses in a soliloquy that she cannot but admire the odd grace of his surly passion. Brutus and Assaracus are both invited to join her Majesty in a hunting expedition. Next follows an interview between Brutus and the Queen,

who is surprised by him while doing homage at the tomb of her departed husband. Brutus declares his passion. She is irresolute, and exclaims :

> "What can I give, when charity to you
> Is perjury to my deceased Argaces?"

In Act III., Ragusa, a sorceress, is in league with Soziman to ruin the virtue and constancy of the Queen. She has four female attendants, who are coarse imitations of the witches in "Macbeth." In this act, the supernatural element is introduced to a terrific extent. Ragusa and her haggard satellites conspire with Soziman, and it is agreed that the Queen and Prince shall be driven to seek refuge from a storm in the same cavern, and that then a philtre, administered by Soziman, shall work its dread effects. The sports begin, the storm is raised, they fly for shelter to the same cavern, and with, of course, the same result as in the case of Dido and Æneas—

> "Prima et Tellus et pronuba Juno
> Dant signum; fulsere ignes, et conscius æther
> Connubiis; summoque ululârunt vertice Nymphæ,
> Ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
> Causa fuit."

Act IV. The Queen pours out her grief to Amarante, and informs her of her ruin. She holds a dagger in her hand, with which, she informs her confidante, she contemplates stabbing Brutus. He, however, enters and succeeds in soothing her. She throws away the dagger, and there ensues much kneeling, weeping, and fainting. Assaracus, meanwhile, having overcome his passion for the Queen, reproaches Brutus with his delays, reminds him of the oracle which urged him to go to Albion, and pleads the cause of his son Locrinus, whom he represents as cheated out of his hopes of an empire. A stormy interview is ended by Assaracus stabbing himself to prove

the sincerity of his sentiments. Brutus is so affected by this desperate act, that he gives orders for the sailing that night. The Queen enters, and asks whether it is his intention to fly from her, observing, that although he may leave her without destroying his peace of mind, that her's is gone for ever. He answers:

> "You call him happy whom the damn'd would pity!
> Despairing ghosts that yell in lightless flames
> Would stand aghast to hear my sufferings told.
> Reflect, and grow more patient of damnation!"

He then adds that go he must, and she, as a matter of course, swoons.

In the last act, the Queen raves about the perjury of Brutus. Amarante requests her Majesty to be tranquil, and declares that if she is not, she will commit suicide. The Queen is quieted. A conference next takes place between Ragusa and Soziman. She gives him a bracelet to wear which she has previously poisoned. To Ragusa it is announced by a spirit, whom she summons from the vasty deep, that she is doomed to perish that night, but she is consoled by the additional intelligence that it will be one of horrific deeds and disasters. Brutus is driven back by a storm, and there is another terrible parting scene between himself and his royal innamorata. Soziman has, in the interval, discovered that he has been poisoned by the bracelet. He goes off the stage in a fury, tearing his hair. The Queen is in agonies of grief, but is soothed by music, and dies. Amarante at this, stabs herself and dies also. The venom of the poisoned bracelet racks the frame of Soziman, and he rushes on, tearing his clothes, stabs himself, and, to use his own language, plunges "headlong to eternal deeps." At this conjuncture of affairs, the ambassadors from Agrigentum again arrive. They find all their plans frustrated. One exclaims "Prodigious!" while the other

confesses that he is "lost in confusion." It is really a very bustling tragedy. There are in it only

1 Natural death,
1 Murder,
1 Poisoning,
3 Suicides,

And there is much thunder and lightning, rage, fury, and bombast throughout. There are horrors enough for a French novel, and it might be revived at a transpontine theatre with great effect. To speak of it in language applied to a different kind of composition: daggers, flames, and poison "dance through its pages in all the mazes of metaphorical confusion. These are the companions of a disturbed imagination—the melancholy madness of poetry without its inspiration."*

In 1680, he produced "The Loyal General," the prologue to which was written by Dryden. Like that great poet, he prefixes to his plays dissertations, which are rather essays on some questions of criticism than prefaces properly so called. The introduction to "The Loyal General" contains some remarks on Shakespeare, which, though they may seem to possess little novelty now that the subject is exhausted, yet show that it was out of no want of respect and admiration for Shakespeare that Tate ventured to alter some of his plays. On the question of the amount of Shakespeare's learning, he asserts that he possessed more than by common report is granted him. He adds: "I am sure he never touches on a Roman story, but the persons, the passages, the manners, the circumstances are all Roman. And what relishes yet of a more exact knowledge, you do not only see a Roman in his hero, but the particular genius of the man without the least mistake of his character, given him by the best historians. You find his Antony, in all the defects and

* Letter of Junius to Sir W. Draper.

excellencies of his mind, a soldier, a reveller, amorous, sometimes rash, sometimes considerate, with all the various emotions of his mind. His Brutus, again, has all the constancy, gravity, morality, generosity imaginable, without the least mixture of private interest or irregular passion. He is true to him even in the imitation of his oratory, the famous speech which he makes him deliver, being exactly agreeable to his manner of expressing himself; of which we have this account: 'Facultas ejus erat militaris et bellicis accommodata tumultibus.'"

"The Loyal General" was succeeded by "The Sicilian Usurper," which is an alteration of "King Richard II." of Shakespeare. It was on political grounds suppressed. Tate some years afterwards published it; and in a prefatory epistle in vindication of himself, he says: "I fell upon the new modelling of this tragedy (as I had just before done on the history of King Lear), charmed with the many beauties I discovered in it, which I knew would become the stage; with as little design of satire on present transactions as Shakespeare himself, that wrote this story before this age began. I am not ignorant of the position of affairs in King Richard II.'s reign: how dissolute the age, and how corrupt the court, a season that beheld ignorance and infamy preferred to office, and power exercised in oppressing learning and merit; but why a history of these times should be suppressed as a libel on ours, is past my understanding. 'Tis sure the worst compliment that was ever paid to a prince."

As Tate has here alluded to his alteration of "King Lear," a few words may be here said on that subject. The crime of mutilating the works of Shakespeare cannot be magnified; but we must impute this seeming arrogance rather to the age than to the individual who attempted it. There appears to have been an impression at this time, that in taste and refinement they had so outstripped the culti-

vation of the Elizabethean era, that it was necessary to tame the extravagancies of Shakespeare's rude imagination. Davenant and Dryden had both set Tate the example. In altering "King Lear," Tate omitted the part of the Fool and introduced a love plot between Edgar and Cordelia. Tate's alteration, as has been before observed, maintained possession of the stage for a considerable time. Colman rejected most that Tate had added. Garrick did the same. When Kemble remodelled it in 1809, he reintroduced many of Tate's lines which had been rejected by Colman and Garrick. In speaking of this, the author of "The History of the English Stage," remarks, "When Shakespeare met John Kemble in the Elysian fields he said to him, 'I thank you heartily for your performance of my Coriolanus, Hamlet, Brutus, &c.—but did you never hear the good old proverb: The cobbler should not go beyond his last? Why would you tamper with the text of my plays? Why give many of my characters names which I never dreamed of? Above all, what could induce you to restore such passages of Tate as even Garrick had rejected when he revised King Lear. St. Laurence never suffered more on his gridiron than I have suffered from the prompt-book.'" Whatever alterations and restorations were occasionally made, it was not until at Drury Lane, in 1823, that the entire fifth act was played as Shakespeare wrote it. Here an unfortunate accident for a time baffled its success. Cordelia was impersonated by Mrs. West. Kean, who played Lear, was scarcely strong enough to carry her. This tempted the risibility of the house, and pit, boxes, and gallery joined in a laugh which lasted until the curtain fell.

Tate in his dramatic compositions has manifested no great desire to win the praise of originality. One successful play was more remunerative than many fulsome dedications. To amuse the theatre-goers, therefore, was the object of Tate and others—and they accordingly plun-

dered the plots of their predecessors as unblushingly as we now prey on those of our Gallic contemporaries. In the nine dramatic pieces which he has left behind him, he borrowed from Ben Jonson, Fletcher, Dekker, and others—besides his alteration of Shakespeare. They had no brilliant success—more than one was a decided failure, but others were frequently played and remained stock pieces. His "Duke and no Duke," was last played at the Haymarket, in 1797. Into his "Richard II." Tate introduced some songs, one of which is the following:

"Retired from any mortal's sight,
The pensive Damon lay,
He blest the discontented night,
And cursed the smiling day:
The tender sharers of his pain,
His flocks no longer graze,
But sadly fixed around the swain,
Like silent mourners gaze.

"He heard the musick of the wood,
And with a sigh reply'd;
He saw the fish sport in the flood,
And wept a deeper tide.
In vain the summer bloom came on,
For still the drooping swain,
Like autumn winds was heard to groan,
Outwept the winter's rain.

"Some ease, said he, some respite give.
Ah, mighty powers! Ah, why
Am I too much distress'd to live,
And yet forbid to die?
Such accents from the shepherd flew,
Whilst on the ground he lay,
At last so deep a sigh he drew,
As bore his life away."

A song in "Cuckold's Haven" supplied Charles II. with a quotation, on an occasion mentioned by Mr. P. Cuningham in his charming story of "Nell Gwynne." The King was dining at the Guildhall. The courtiers and

citizens drank as deep as was then the fashion. The Lord Mayor in his cups waxing practically facetious, Charles dismissed his suite without ceremony, and sought to extricate himself from the wine-inspired familiarities of the civic dignitary by stealing off to his coach. He was pursued; his Lordship seized him by the hand and said, "Sir, you shall stay, and take another bottle." The merry Monarch quoted from Tate:

"He that is drunk is as great as a king."

and went back to finish the wine.

In the play, at the end of Act II., there is another song equally in praise of Bacchus, which illustrates the political influence of the theatre, and the support that it strove to give to the throne.

"How great are the blessings of Government made,
By the excellent rule of our Prince,
Who, while trouble and cares do his pleasure invade,
To his people all joy does dispense:
And while he for us is carking and thinking,
We have nothing to mind—but our shops and our trade,
And then to divert us with drinking.

"For him we derive all our pleasure and wealth,
Then fill me a glass; nay, fill it up higher,
My soul is athirst for his Majesty's health,
And an Ocean of drink can't quench my desire;
Since all we enjoy to his bounty we owe,
'Tis fit all our bumpers like that should o'erflow."

No materials exist, or if they do the authors of this work have failed to discover them, which would enable us to give any accurate or trustworthy account of the incidents of Tate's life. As dramatist we have spoken of him. Let the reader next look at him under the aspect of Laureate and psalmodist.

Tate succeeded on the demise of Shadwell in 1692. His appointment by Lord Jersey, after the accession of Queen Anne, is recorded in the following form of words:

"These are to certify that I have sworn and admitted Nahum Tate into ye place and quality of Poet-Laureate to her Majesty in ordinary, to have, hold, and exercise and enjoy the said place together with all rights, profits, privileges, and advantages thereunto belonging, in as full and ample manner as any Poet-Laureate hath formerly held and of right ought to have held and enjoyed the same.

"Given under my hand this 24th day of Decr in the first year of her Majesty's reign.

"JERSEY."

During this reign the appointment was placed in the gift of the Lord Chamberlain, and Tate was re-appointed in 1714.

In his position as Laureate little can be said to his honour. His excuse we find in what we know of the literary men of that era. He was, as Mr. Macaulay says, in morals something between a beggar and a pander. In times of sudden change, it is scarcely probable that we should find the life of a necessitous man of letters, free from the inconsistency which blemished the careers of even the rich and noble. Tate was nearly five-and-twenty years a Poet-Laureate. He eulogized the memory of Charles II.; hailed the accession of James; welcomed William more enthusiastically; panegyrised Mary and Anne, living and dead; and wrote one official ode for George I. Dryden and Waller, however, before him, had exhausted fancy in lauding Cromwell, and at the Restoration were lavish of their praise on the Merry Monarch. To say good things on a great occasion, was all they aimed at. Conscience and consistency were quite out of the case.

It is difficult to discover by what interest Tate gained the appointment, for he had eulogized Charles and James, and had been the friend and coadjutor of the deposed Dryden. His Christian name may possibly have recommended him—or his father's puritanical leaning have

been remembered. It seems more likely, however, attributable to the fact that his poverty was known, that he had a little interest, that he possessed the necessary amount of pliancy for a court poet, and that there were no formidable rivals in the field.

Pope was only at this time four years old, and even with his precocity had not yet "lisped in numbers." Swift had written one or more of his Pindaric Odes, but they had merited the discouraging remark of his relation Dryden, and had been sufficiently rewarded by the King teaching him in Sir W. Temple's garden, how to cut asparagus in the Dutch way. Handsome provision had been made for Montague and Prior. Garth had only just passed his examination, and become a fellow of the College of Physicians, and the world had not yet seen the Dispensary. Butler had died in poverty twelve years before; and that poverty, in Tate's words, was a greater satire on the age than his writings. Otway had shared the same wretched fate. And the sweet numbers of Waller were silent. Tate was as good as any of the poetasters of the day, and as a voluminous versifier, and an industrious dramatic author, had been much before the public. Any detailed account of his laureate lucubrations would be superfluous. They are very numerous, and may be found in the library of the British Museum with much pomp of large type and gorgeous binding. The brevity of each poem is its chief recommendation. He flattered the throne, rejoiced in all court appointments, wrote elegies when great men died, advised the Parliament, and celebrated the victories of Prince George of Denmark, and of Marlborough. There is a couplet in his poem on the "sacred memory" of Charles II., which is worthy of one of his successors, Eusden. The grief is terrific.

> "To farthest lands let groaning winds relate,
> And rolling Oceans roar their master's fate."

"The death of Queen Mary," says Johnson, "produced

a subject; perhaps no funeral was ever so poetically attended." Tate is not mentioned by the Doctor as one of the tuneful mourners, but his strain is louder and loftier than usual. He apotheosizes her in these lines.

> "With robes invested of celestial dyes,
> She towr's, and treads the Empyrean Skies;
> Angelick choirs, skill'd in triumphant song,
> Heaven's battlements and crystal turrets throng.
> The signal's given, the eternal gates unfold
> Burning with jasper, wreath'd in burnish'd gold,
> And myriads now of flaming minds I see—
> Pow'rs, Potentates, Heaven's awfull Hierarchy
> In gradual orbs enthron'd, but all divine
> Ineffably those sons of glory shine."

By one of his official poems, written at a particular crisis in the reign of William III. he excited much bitter attack from opponents. Many of our readers will remember the history of the Kentish Petition. This bold document requested the Parliament then sitting to attend to public affairs and not their "own private heats," and besought them to turn their attention to the supplies, and enable the King to defend the country, and protect our allies. The gentlemen who presented it were Justinian Champneys, Sir Thomas Culpepper, William Culpepper, William Hamilton, and David Polhill. The House of Commons felt that so bold a measure must be as boldly resisted. They treated this document as a libel, and gave these five gentlemen into the custody of the sergeant-at-arms. On their remonstrating with him on the illegality of the arrest, that officer informed them in language highly indecorous, that he did not care for the law. They remained under his charge for five days, and were then lodged in Gate House Prison. This arbitrary act occasioned much discontent and disturbance. Many pamphlets were written on both sides of the question, De Foe being one of the ablest advocates of the petitioners. The popular feeling was against the Parliament, and they were at length libe-

rated. Tate took the royal and popular view of the case against the House of Commons, and wrote a poem called "The Kentish Worthies." For this he was severely assailed. In "The History of Faction," we read: "Nor had they reason to think that the court would discountenance them in such practices; for the Poet-Laureate, who is a sworn servant to the Crown, was ordered to write a poem called 'The Kentish Worthies,' which he otherwise durst not have done." Another writer tells us:* "And to complete the show (the liberation of the petitioners), that it might look somewhat majestic, the ballad-maker of Whitehall was ordered to compose some lines to the laud and praise of the five Kentish Worthies, which he did with like success as when he and the parson (Dr. Brady), rebelled against King David, and broke his lute, and murdered his psalms."

Tate's Laureate Odes are not more meritorious than his other official poetic offerings. The one for the year 1705 is preserved. It was performed to music before her Majesty, on the 1st of January. The grand chorus with which it concludes runs thus:

"While Anne and George their empire maintain
Of the land and the main,
And a Marlborough fights
Secure are the rights
Of Albion and Europe in Piety's reign."

Whatever envy among contemporaneous, or contempt among later writers, Tate's official eminence provoked, he had his share of eulogy as well. In some lines prefixed to his "Miscellanea Sacra," the writer thus addresses him:

"Long may the laurel flourish on your brow,
Since you so well a Laureate's duty know,
For virtue's rescue daring to engage
Against the tyrant vices of the age."

* "Account of some late designs to create a misunderstanding between the King and the people," quoted in Wilson's Life of De Foe.

In contrast to such writings as called forth this praise, Tate has been guilty of some offences. The fact that he rendered into English the second Satire of Juvenal, in what is called "Dryden's Translation," should perhaps screen Dryden from some of the censure which has been cast on him for coarseness. Tate contributed also to "Miscellaneous Poems," published by Tonson, and edited by Dryden, an English version of one of Ovid's loosest elegies. This publication chiefly consisted of poems, original and translated, by "the most eminent hands." The nature of some of its contents, is quite sufficient to show that the taste of the reading public was not a whit purer than that of the *habitués* of the theatre. At the end of the fourth volume, there is a long translation by Tate of a composition of a very singular kind. It is the celebrated Latin poem on a medical subject by "that famous Poet and Physician, Fracastorius, Englished by Mr. Tate." There are some prefatory lines to Dr. Thomas Hobbs, and a life of the renowned medico-poet-philanthropist. In this memoir, the world is informed that Fracastorius was born at Verona, that he was specially and providentially preserved in childhood to write his great poem, for that while in his mother's arms, she was struck dead by lightning, while he remained unscathed; that he lived to rival Pliny and Catullus, and outstrip all his contemporaries in learning and poetry; that he studied under Peter Pomponatius, and became so devoted a student that Polybius and Plutarch were scarce ever out of his hands; that when not employed in literary avocations he was occupied in curing disorders, and that in the intervals of his professional exertion, while the pestilence he so vividly describes, was raging in the city he found leisure to compose these undying verses, which no less a man than Sanazarius is driven in despair to admit excelled his own poem "De Partu Virginis," which was a labour of twenty years. It is also recorded

that Fracastorius died of apoplexy at seventy, having contracted many friendships, and having deservedly no enemy.

To criticise either the Latin or English would take us beyond our limits. Tate appears to have been compelled to work for the booksellers, as a translator of prose as well as verse. In 1686, he published, under the title of "Triumphs of Love and Constancy," a translation of the "Æthopics" of Heliodorus. This work is the earliest and best Greek romance, and narrates what are called "The Heroic Amours of Theagenes and Chariclea." Its author was born at Emesa, in Syria, and lived at the end of the fourth century, under the reign of Theodosius and his sons. He wrote the "Æthiopics" in his youth, and upon his being appointed Bishop of Tucca, it is said, that a provincial Synod decreed that the author must burn his romance or lay down his bishopric. Heliodorus chose the latter alternative. The whole story, however, sounds very apocryphal; and its improbability is heightened by the fact that, although as a love story it offends against modern notions of delicacy, its tendency is to exalt virtue. It was twice translated into English before Mr. Tate and his coadjutor, who is described as a person of quality, undertook it. A version has since been given by Mr. Payne in 1792. The Greek manuscript was strangely preserved. Although well known in earlier, it was in modern times, almost forgotten, until, at the sacking of Ofen, in 1526, the manuscript was found in the library of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, and as it was decorated and illuminated it attracted the cupidity of a soldier who brought it into Germany, where falling into the hands of Vincentius Opsopæus, it was printed at Basil in 1534.

Tate also published a translation from the French of "The Life of the Prince de Condé." We must, however,

forget what he had meanwhile been doing in his poetical capacity. In 1697, he produced a short poem called "The Innocent Epicure, or the Art of Angling." It is of the didactic kind, and lays down minute directions for fishing. It is tedious and prosaic, and the rhymes are careless and faulty. "Panacea," a poem on tea, in 1700, was a more successful effort of his Muse. The subject may appear to us a strange one, but tea was then a novelty and a luxury. It was sold in a liquid state. In Dryden's "Wild Gallant" it is spoken of as a morning draught for those who had drank too deeply overnight. Pepys tells us: "I sent for a cup of tea (a Chinese drink), of which I had never drank before." In 1664, the East India Company purchased two pounds and two ounces to present to the King. Its virtues were then very highly estimated, and they are celebrated in this poem with Tate's utmost power. The versification is excellent, but as a whole, from its plan and subject, it is uninteresting.

This effort, his partnership with Dryden, his translations, and the success of one volume of poems, which had gone through two editions, seemed to have increased the fame of the Laureate. By a poetical friend he is thus addressed:

> "The British Laurel by old Chaucer worn,
> Still fresh and gay did Dryden's brow adorn,
> And that its lustre may not fade on thine,
> Wit, fancy, judgment, Tate, in thee combine."

It remains that we should look on Tate as Psalmist. And we shall see that he made much recompense for his few former offences against morality in pandering to the taste of the age, by his later writings, which tend to support the cause of religion and virtue. The times were mending a little, and some check seems to have been given to the open profligacy which characterized the period of the Restoration. In the Reformed Churches abroad,

Protestantism and Psalmody had gone hand in hand together. A want was now felt in the English Church. The Old Version, written by Sternhold, and altered by Hopkins and others, sometimes for the better, oftener for the worse, had been in general use from the time of its publication. It was now thought that the advance our language had made, demanded a version more in accordance with the taste of the age, and that smoothness of versification which was more and more aimed at by our poets. Hence we exchanged the rugged strength and occasional doggrel of Sternhold and Hopkins for the more level mediocrity of Brady and Tate.

What brought about the literary partnership, which has been so often made a target for the shafts of sarcasm, we have no means of ascertaining or conjecturing, unless it were the tie of a common nationality. Dr. Nicholas Brady was Tate's fellow-countryman. He was educated at Westminster, and showed very early a talent for writing verse. He was an active politician and a popular preacher, and took a busy part in the Revolution of 1688, for which at the time he severely suffered. He lived, however, to be rewarded for his exertions, for at his death, in 1726, he was the incumbent of three benefices. He outlived his coadjutor eleven years, and could, with a better grace, have preached the funeral sermon of the unfortunate Psalmodist than that of sack-drinking Shadwell, whose name, until heard from the pulpit, had been mainly associated with taverns and theatres. Dr. Brady, however, could have quoted a precedent for his funeral oration; for the praises of Nell Gwynne had been sounded from the pulpit.

They at first printed a version of twenty Psalms, as an "Essay," as they termed it, and in the following year appeared the completed work, "A New Version of the Psalms of David," fitted to the tunes used in churches, by N. Brady, D.D., Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty,

and N. Tate Esq., Poet-Laureate. In a pamphlet entitled: "A brief and full account of Mr. Tate and Mr. Brady's 'New Version of the Psalms,' by a true son of the Church," the Royal Sanction is copied. "At the Court of Kensington, Decr. 3rd, 1696. Present, the King's most excellent Majesty in Council. Upon the humble petition of Nicholas Brady and Nahum Tate this day read at the Board, setting forth that the Petitioners have, with their utmost care and industry, compleated a New Version of the Psalms of David in English Metre, fitted for publick use; and humbly praying His Majesty's Royal allowance that the said Version may be used in such congregations as shall think fit to receive it; His Majesty, taking the same into his royal consideration, is pleased to order in Council that the said New Version of the Psalms in English Metre be, and the same is hereby allowed, and permitted to be used in all Churches and Chapels and Congregations as shall think fit to receive the same."

Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, sent out circular letters of recommendation to all the clergy of his diocese. The version has been eulogised by Basil Kennet and others; but Bishop Beveridge has censured it for faults which it would *now* be difficult to discover. "There are," he says, "many such new phrases and romantic expressions in the new version, which are taken up by our present poets, and being now in fashion may serve well enough in other places, but can by no means suit with a divine poem, much less with one inspired by God himself." It encountered much prejudice and provoked some controversy. Tate undertook its defence, and published, in 1710, "An Essay for Promoting Psalmody." It is dedicated to Queen Anne. The style is quaint and florid. Psalmody is boldly personified and apostrophized as a goddess, a princess, a charmer. Parts of the treatise are written in a strain of rapture, and with the tone of a man

of warm and sincere piety. He complains that while psalmody has been much cultivated in all the Reformed Churches it has been neglected in ours, and he attributes the decay into which it has fallen very much to the apathy "of our quality and gentry." "You may hear them," he says, "in the responses and reading psalms; but the giving out a singing psalm, seems to strike 'em dumb." He next extols Praise in occupying a devotional rank higher than Prayer, and supports his view by some beautiful lines from the "Gondibert" of his Laureate predecessor Davenant.

> "For Prayer the Ocean is, where diversely
> Men steer their course, each to a different coast,
> Where oft our interests so discordant be,
> That half beg winds by which the rest are lost.
>
> "*Praise is devotion fit for mighty minds,*
> *The diff'ring World's agreeing sacrifice.*"

These raptures about the superior nature of Praise from one who had written a version of the Psalms, remind us forcibly of the clerk of a small country church in Wales, who, inasmuch as by playing a violoncello and singing lustily, he produced what is called in the 100th psalm "awful mirth," was so gratified with the success of his musical efforts, that he informed the rector one Sunday with an air of cheerful confidence, that although prayer and preaching were perhaps necessary, praise was the noblest part of divine worship. The rector's reply is an answer to Tate and to the rural musician, and is a good comment on the lines of Davenant: "If your prayers are not accepted, your praises will never be heard."

Tate then proceeds, in his treatise, to show what were the faults of the old version, and to lament the prejudices which obstruct the attempt to produce one better fitted for purposes of devotion. "You must," he writes,

"expect the first outcry against any new version of the Psalms from the ignorance amongst some of our common people, who, because they found the old singing psalms bound up with their Bibles, take it for granted that these English metres, as well as the matter, were compiled by King David. Nay, some have supposed a greater person was the composer of these metres. For instance, the late Bishop of Ely upon his first using of his brother Dr. Patrick's new version in family devotion, observed (as I have heard himself relate the passage) that a servant maid of a musical voice was silent for several days together. He asked her the reason, whether she were not well or had a cold, adding that he was much delighted to hear her, because she sung sweetly and kept the rest in tune. 'I am well enough in health,' answered she, 'and have no cold, but if you must needs know the plain truth of the matter, *as long as you sang Jesus Christ's psalms, I sung along with ye, but now you sing psalms* of your own invention, you may sing by yourselves.'"

Tate concludes his essay with a rhapsody, from which we give a brief extract.

"O Queen of Sacred Harmony, how powerful are thy charms. Care shuns thy walks, Fear kindles with courage, and Joy sublimes into ecstasy. What! shall stage syrens sing and Psalmody sleep! Theatres be thronged, and thy temples empty! Shall thy votaries abroad find heart and voice to sing in the fiery furnace of persecution, upon the waters of affliction, and our Britons sit sullenly silent under their vines and fig-trees?"

To expend any criticism on this version of the Psalms would scarcely be less absurd, than to gravely endeavour to discover by internal evidence which were contributed by Brady and which by Tate. In "Miscellanea Sacra," published in 1698, there is a rendering of the 104th Psalm by him which is excellent. Nothing but want of

space prevents our inviting criticism to it by a long quotation. To sum up his merits as a psalmodist, it may be said of him that he has only failed where others have done so; for are not all attempts, save a few by eminent poets, scattered here and there in literature, rather parodies than paraphrases?

The sorrow and the triumphs which shook the strings of the royal harp are breathed in such strains of poetry as speak with divine eloquence in the unfettered rhythm of our version; but the sublimity is dwarfed by the exactments of metre, and the music faintly and falsely echoed by the jingle of rhyme.

In 1713, Tate undertook the management of a well-meaning publication, which was as short-lived as many such have been, and, strange to say, as one of the same name started in London within the last four years. "The Monitor," for so was it called, was to appear on alternate days, and the first number was issued on March 2nd, 1713. It was "intended for the promoting of Religion and Virtue, and the suppression of vice and immorality, in pursuance of Her Majesty's most gracious Direction."

The undertaking not only enjoyed royal patronage, but was encouraged by many of the nobility, bishops, and clergy. But in spite of all this, and the moderate price (one penny per number), it struggled unsuccessfully for but a short time. They were sent to the subscribers' houses on the terms of twelvepence a month, "sixpence on the receipt of the first paper, and sixpence more when the twelfth paper is delivered."

We are informed that through the contribution of some pious persons, some schools were to be supplied with them, "the masters of which will oblige their scholars to get the Poems by heart as part of their exercise." These scholars merit our sincerest sympathies. The publication commences

with an "Essay on Divine Poesie." Then follows an exhortation to the youth of Great Britain, which endeavours to carry out the principle which the paper professed, viz., "to establish them in the principles of Religion and Virtue, and fortify them against the attacks of Vice." The swearer and the gambler are denounced in two separate numbers. "The Witch of Endor" is the subject of a sublime dialogue, full of pious profanity. Another is a description of "The Upright Man," and is a bombastic paraphrase of Horace's "justum et tenacem propositi virum." The stern stoicism of the character is depicted in a couplet, which prophetically expresses a phrase of modern slang—

> "Though whirl'd by storms the racking clouds are seen,
> His unmolested breast is *all serene*."

In the number for April 6th, a prose notice is added, which contains an anecdote not in the least *à-propos* to the subject of the paper, but referring to a matter which has been alluded to in a former part of this work. "We shall beg the reader's pardon for mentioning a passage told us by a gentleman of our society, almost forty years since, by Mr. Dryden, who went, with Mr. Waller in company, to make a visit to Mr. Milton, and desire his leave for putting his 'Paradise Lost' into rhyme for the stage. 'Well, Mr. Dryden,' says Milton, 'it seems you have a mind to tagg my points, and you have my leave to tagg 'em; but some of 'em are so awkward and old-fashioned, that I think you had as good leave 'em as you found 'em.'" In the last number but one, we are told that those "who particularly approve of these Divine subjects, seem anxious that entertaining ones may be mixed with them, and that to meet this want, some gentlemen of the brightest parts are setting upon such a work." Whether "The Oracle" ever appeared, we know not; but next day "The Monitor" died.

And so ends the literary career of Nahum Tate.

Of his private life and habits, little can be ascertained. He was, we are told, of a downcast look, and very silent in company; but he has also been described as a "free and fuddling companion." He has been praised for his integrity and modesty.

There is nothing to justify Dr. Johnson's surmise that he was ejected from his office at the accession of George I. The date of Rowe's appointment is 1715, and it was in this year that Tate died in the Mint, Southwark, where he had taken refuge from his numerous creditors.

He appears to have been very industrious with his pen, but in worldly matters imprudent and unfortunate. His case is one among a thousand which prove the necessity of such institutions as the Athenæum Institute and the Guild of Literature and Art. Patronage was of some avail to Tate and other necessitous men of letters; but when improvidence has not even patronage to fall back upon, as is now the case, there would seem to be greater need for co-operative providence.

Had Tate lived in these days, his life would doubtless have been very badly written by a near relative, and the minutest details of his existence chronicled with precision. There was no such lust for biography when he died in the Mint. But gibbeted by the sarcasms of Pope, he has been much misrepresented by those who copied the sarcasms without reading his works. Sir Walter Scott, who doubtless knew them, gives a mention of him, severe, but fairer than that of many other writers. "He is one of those second-rate bards," he says, "who, by dint of pleonasm and expletive, can find smooth lines if any one will supply ideas."

Neither he nor Shadwell deserve the treatment they have suffered even at the hands of recent writers. Miss

Strickland calls the latter "the loathsome Laureate." Religious and political prejudice can see nothing but what is detestable in the poet of the court of William and Mary. We are more surprised to read in Southey's "Life of Cowper"—"Nahum Tate, of all my predecessors, must have ranked the lowest of the Laureates if he had not succeeded Shadwell." Could Southey, with all his varied book lore, have been ignorant of the verses of Eusden? and is he not in this estimate somewhat polite and merciful to his immediate predecessor, Pye?

## NICHOLAS ROWE.

Nicholas Rowe was born at his maternal grandfather's seat, Little Beckford, in Bedfordshire, in 1673. The family from which he descended had long been settled at Lamerton in Devonshire, and the arms they bore had been won for them by a crusader from whom Rowe could trace his descent in a direct line. His father was the first of the house who neglected the cultivation of the ancestral estate, allured by the more brilliant temptations of professional life. He entered at the Middle Temple—rose to the degree of serjeant-at-law, and now lies in the Temple Church. Rowe was first sent to a private school at Highgate, from whence he was removed to Westminster, then flourishing under the rod of Dr. Busby. In 1688 he was elected a king's scholar. He gave early indications of superior ability, and no boy's faculties were allowed to lie dormant under the Doctor's energetic, though kind-hearted, supervision. His academical exercises we are told were above the average merit, and were produced with little labour. At sixteen, his father removed him from Westminster to the Middle Temple, and at that

early age he commenced with great resolution the study of the law. He had already made considerable progress in the acquisition of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and had dabbled in poetry. The way in which he applied himself to his legal studies showed that his mind was capable of grasping a large conception, his powers of application were great, and under the superintending advice of his father he might have become a legal luminary. But when he was but nineteen years of age his father died, and accident, indolence, or constitutional bias gave a different direction to his career. He turned aside from the prospects of wealth and eminence that were opening upon him, declined the patronage of Treby, Lord Chief Justice, and devoted himself unreservedly to the cultivation of his literary tastes.

He first came forward as a candidate for poetical fame in his twenty-fifth year, when his tragedy, "The Ambitious Step-mother," was acted at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is a sacred piece, taken from the first Book of Kings, the story turning upon the establishment of Solomon upon the throne. This performance exhibits great strength and sweetness of diction, and a loftiness of sentiment, conspicuous in all the after writings of Rowe, while the characters are maintained with discrimination, and when we reflect that Betterton, Booth, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bracegirdle exerted their rare and varied powers in its representation, we cease to wonder at its decided success. This was followed by "Tamerlane," a political play, acted at the same theatre in 1702. Rowe always regarded this production with the fondest affection, and doubtless it excited the noisiest applause. He had always been a stanch supporter of the Hanoverian succession, and the imaginary virtues with which he encumbered Tamerlane were intended as a compliment to the reigning King, William III. Tamerlane was performed

by Betterton, and Bajazet, Emperor of the Turks, in whom it was presumed Louis XIV. was exhibited, by Verbruggen. It was for a time regularly acted every 4th of November, the anniversary of the landing of William III.; but at length, when that King was dead and the two monarchies were at peace, the impropriety of such a distorted caricature of a great, though rival Sovereign, became manifest even to national prejudice, and the representation was discountenanced.

In the following year appeared "The Fair Penitent," the plot taken almost entirely from "The Fatal Dowry" of Massinger. This tragedy was so popular until within a very recent period, that it seems unnecessary to make any observations on its merit. The great fault of the play is that the action terminates with the fourth act. One of the characters, Lothario, was the foundation of the Lovelace of Richardson, which was more familiar to the readers of a past age than "Pendennis" or "Mr. Pickwick" are to those of the present.

A ludicrous incident happened in connection with the performance of this play the first season it was brought out. Lothario, after he is killed by Altamont in the fourth act, lies dead on the stage in the last. Such a situation is of course filled by one of the underlings in a theatre. Powell played Lothario, and Warren, his man, claimed the right of lying for his defunct master, and flattered himself he performed the part in a superior manner. One evening, the fifth act began as usual, and was proceeding successfully, when, about the middle of the distressful pourtrayal, Powell, behind the scenes, called aloud for his man, quite forgetful of the important part he was performing. Warren, from his bier upon the stage, answered instantly, "Here, Sir!" Powell, who was of an impatient temper, annoyed at his non-appearance, vociferated with an insulting expression: "Come here

this moment, or I'll break every bone in your skin!" Warren, terrified, jumped up with all his funereal appendages about him, which unfortunately were tied fast to the handles of the bier. The audience burst out into a roar. This only frightened him; he tugged away, threw down Calista (Mrs. Barry), and overwhelmed her with the table, lamp, book, bones, and all the paraphernalia of the charnel-house. He succeeded at last in breaking away from his trammels, and rushed off the stage; and the play at once ended, amid shrieks of laughter. Even the stately Betterton relaxed from his gravity,

"Smiled in the tumult and enjoy'd the storm."

But he prudently withdrew the play for the remainder of the season.

In 1706, a strange fancy came over our poet. He was of an hilarious disposition, always ready for a laugh, and this propensity he probably mistook for comic power. He accordingly produced his comedy of "The Biter" (a cant term for one who hoaxes), and the dreary production failed ignominiously. Rowe was not at all prepared for such a catastrophe, and himself keenly enjoyed its representation, laughing immoderately at the exquisite jokes with which he fancied it abounded.

In the same year he produced the tragedy of "Ulysses," which was acted at the theatre in the Haymarket, and dedicated to the Lord Godolphin. It was successful at the time, and the character of Penelope, which Mrs. Barry personated, was finely drawn; but it has not escaped the neglect which has attended all attempts in England to give novelty or variety to the stories of the Pagan mythology. "The Royal Convert," acted in 1708, did not meet with much success, though the part of Rodogune, a Saxon Princess, is finely conceived and eminently tragical. Gibbon intimates that

Procopius might have afforded Rowe the hint for this character.

Our dramatist had always been an admirer of Shakespeare, and in 1709 he edited his plays, to which he prefixed a life of the poet; Betterton having visited Stratford to collect whatever traditionary matter to the purpose still existed. The edition is without notes, but the text received a careful revision, and contributed to that gradual revolution in public taste which in our day will acknowledge neither rival nor second to the "sweet swan of Avon."

Rowe was not so entirely devoted to his books and his plays as to be inattentive to matters of more worldly import, and when the Duke of Queensbury was made Secretary of State, he consented to act as his under-secretary. The Duke died when he had held his appointment but three years, and he then made some advances to the famous Harley, Earl of Oxford, and a story is told, which places either the urbanity of that minister or the perception of the poet in a somewhat unfavourable light. When he attended to present his respects to the Earl, who was then Lord High Treasurer, he was received with great affability, and in the course of conversation the Earl asked if he understood Spanish. Rowe, with the prospect of some mission to the Peninsula starting involuntarily to his mind, replied in the negative, but hoped in a very short time to be able to understand and speak it with facility. He instantly retired to a country farm-house, applied himself with unremitting assiduity to the language, and at the end of a few months waited again on the Earl, to acquaint him with the success of his industry. "Are you sure," said that nobleman, "you understand it thoroughly?" Rowe answered in the affirmative. "Then," replied the Earl, "how happy are you, Mr. Rowe, in being able to enjoy the pleasure of reading 'Don Quixote' in the

original!" The mortified Whig retired, and waited for better times.

In 1714 he produced "Jane Shore," in which Cibber took a part, written professedly in imitation of Shakespeare; though, as Dr. Johnson very justly remarks, in what he thought himself an imitator of Shakespeare it is not easy to conceive. The piece, however, was frequently acted, and with success.

In the following year he produced his last, though by no means his best tragedy, "Lady Jane Grey." A friend of his, a Mr. Smith, of Christ Church, Oxford, whom he terms a very learned and ingenious gentleman, had meditated writing a play on this subject, but died, leaving some papers filled with notes, though in a state of great confusion. Rowe took up the idea, but could only avail himself of one scene, which is that in the third act, in which Lord Guildford persuades Lady Jane to accept the crown. The preface to this piece, the only one he ever wrote, concludes thus: "I shall turn this, my youngest child, out into the world with no other provision than a saying, which I remember to have seen before—one of Mrs. Behn's:

"Va! mon enfant, prend ta fortune."

The accession of George I. (1716) brought Rowe an auspicious gale of worldly success. He was made Poet-Laureate. "I am afraid," says Johnson, "by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate, who died in the Mint, where he was forced to seek shelter by extreme poverty." He likewise became a land surveyor of the Customs in the port of London. The Prince of Wales nominated him Clerk of his Council; and Parker, the Lord Chancellor, on the very day he received the seals, appointed him without solicitation Secretary of the Presentations. He was revolving a tragedy on the story of the "Rape of Lucretia," when death over-

took him on the 6th of December, 1718, in the forty-fifth year of his age. He was buried on the 19th in Westminster Abbey, near Chaucer; and his old schoolfellow, Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, read the funeral service over him. A monument was erected to his memory by his widow, and Pope wrote the following epitaph, which was subsequently altered, though not improved.

"Thy relics, Rowe, to this fair urn we trust,
And, sacred, place by Dryden's awful dust.
Beneath a rude and nameless stone he lies,
To which thy tomb shall guide inquiring eyes.
Peace to thy gentle shade, and endless rest!
Bless'd in thy genius—in thy love too blest!
One grateful woman to thy fame supplies
What a whole thankless land to his denies."

He was twice married, his first wife was a daughter of Mr. Parsons, an auditor of the revenue; his second, of Mr. Devenish, a gentleman in Dorsetshire. He left a son by the former, and a daughter by the latter. His translation of Lucan's "Pharsalia," which he lived long enough to complete, though not to publish, was found among his papers after his death, and published by Dr. Welwood, with a short memoir prefixed, from which we make the following extract of his character, drawn with a slightly partial hand.

"His person was graceful and well made, his face regular and of a manly beauty. He had a quick and fruitful invention, a deep penetration and a large compass of thought, with singular dexterity and easiness in making his thoughts to be understood. He was master of most parts of polite learning, especially the classical authors, both Greek and Latin, understood the French, Italian, and Spanish languages, and spoke the first fluently, and the other two tolerably well. He had a good taste in philosophy, and having a firm impression of religion upon his

mind, he took great delight in divinity and ecclesiastical history.

"His conversation was pleasant, witty, and learned, without the least tincture of affectation or pedantry; and his inimitable manner of diverting and enlivening the company made it impossible for any one to be out of humour when he was in it. Envy and detraction seemed to be entirely foreign to his constitution; and whatever provocations he met with at any time, he passed them over without the least thought of resentment or revenge."

Pope bears testimony to the vivacity of his disposition. In one of his letters he writes thus: "Mr. Rowe accompanied me, and passed a week in the forest. I need not tell you how much a man of his turn entertained me; but I must acquaint you there is a vivacity and gaiety of disposition almost peculiar to him, which makes it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness which generally succeeds all our pleasures."

Our author had his weaknesses, however, as the following trifling anecdote will show. Strolling one day into the famed coffee-house, "The Cocoa Tree," in St. James's Street, he saw Garth in conversation with two noblemen; and sitting down nearly opposite, attempted to catch the Doctor's eye. Garth perceived his drift, and was obtusely blind to all his advances. At length Rowe summoned a waiter, and sent him to ask Garth for his snuff-box, a valuable one, the gift of some foreign prince. The box was sent, but the lender still appeared absorbed in conversation. The request was repeated two or three times with no better success. At length Garth drew out a pencil, wrote on the lid the two Greek characters, φ. ῥ. (fie, Rowe), and then sent it across. Rowe rose and left the room in high dudgeon.

He translated the first book of Quillet's "Callipœdia," and the golden verses of Pythagoras.

His powers of elocution were great, and Mrs. Oldfield used to say that the best instruction for an actress was to hear Rowe read her part in any new play.

The biography of such a writer would scarcely seem complete without some slight mention of the actors whose efforts were essential to the popularity of his works. Plays whose chief merit lies in the melody of their versification and in their external structure, depend for their success less upon their intrinsic merit than upon the degree of ability with which they are represented on the stage. Rowe's characters are few, and he was peculiarly fortunate in his actors. Betterton, Booth, and Verbruggen, were generally included in the cast, while Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle invariably performed the female parts, of which very few of his plays had more than two. We append, therefore, the following brief notices of those eminent performers who contributed in such an important degree to our poet's reputation.

Thomas Betterton was born at Westminster in August, 1635. He was apprenticed to Rhodes, the bookseller at Charing Cross, who, in the company he collected previous to the Restoration, had for his principal actors Betterton and Kynaston, another of his apprentices, both of whom eventually became prodigies in their art. In 1663, the former married Mrs. Saunderson, who, according to one report, was the first actress that trod the boards in this country. She excelled in Shakespearian characters, and her Lady Macbeth was one of the finest performances the stage has witnessed.

An outline of the principal events in Betterton's life is elsewhere incidentally given in this work. His joining Davenant's company, succeeding to the principal share of the management, proposing the coalition of the two companies, then heading the revolt, and afterwards transferring

his licence to Sir John Vanbrugh. His private character was exemplary in the highest degree. He was kind-hearted, charitable, modest, and sincere. Though his salary was never large, he, with a prudence rare in his profession, contrived to save a moderate competence, which, when about to enjoy the reward of his life's labours, he lost in a commercial speculation, through the culpable persuasion of a friend. That friend, however, he frankly forgave, took charge of his helpless daughter on his death, and reared her as his own.

Oppressed by age and infirmities, he had to return to the stage; and the last character he played was Melantius, in "The Maid's Tragedy." He was then suffering under a severe attack of the gout, but took a repellent medicine, which enabled him to walk in slippers; and he acted with all the fire of his youth and the success of his manhood. But the ringing applause of that evening was his death-knell. The distemper returned with aggravated virulence, and in three days he was no more. He has generally been esteemed as the ablest actor this country has produced. His impersonation of Hamlet has been the theme of universal praise, and no one, before or since, ever approached so near that wondrous ideal. His first interview with the Ghost, a scene generally so tame and ineffective, he managed with such consummate art —so profound was the awe and terror depicted in his countenance—that a shudder would run through the audience as though they also felt the presence of the terrible phantom. And so thoroughly could he identify himself with his part, that, though of a sanguine complexion, he was frequently seen to turn ashy pale through the intensity of his emotion when his father's spirit again enters, and interrupts the dialogue with his guilty mother. Yet such perfection cost many a laborious effort. His figure was not good, his voice was

thick and low, and his actions ungainly; but against all these disadvantages he struggled, and achieved so great success.

Barton Booth was honourably descended, and received his education at Westminster. His first predilection for the stage was excited by the applause he received, when a Westminster scholar, on acting Pamphilus, in the "Andrea" of Terence. The inclination ripened into a passion, and when at Cambridge, he boldly defied all consequences, and ran off with a company of strolling players. The distress of his family on hearing of his misconduct was excessive. His mother was attacked with fever, his father became almost frenzied, but all was forgotten when the scapegrace returned home hungry and wet, without money and without clothes. The ill success of his first adventure, however, failed to damp his ardour. He again decamped, appeared on a stage in Bartholomew Fair, and then went over to try his fortune in Ireland. At Dublin, the first character he attempted was Oronooko, and he was well received, though a ludicrous incident moved the audience to laughter when they ought to have been melted into tears. The evening was warm. Booth, forgetful of his blackened face, wiped himself with his handkerchief; and with his visage most grotesquely streaked, returned to the stage, and was astounded at the roar that greeted his re-appearance. He remained in Ireland two years; and his success and pertinacity induced his friends to relent in their opposition to his choice. About 1701, he returned to London, and was introduced to Betterton; and when his former schoolfellow Rowe brought out his "Ambitious step-mother," Booth played the part of Artaban.

He now progressed rapidly, was soon esteemed only inferior to Betterton, and when that great actor died, suc-

ceeded him in his principal characters. He was extremely forcible in depicting the passions of rage and grief, and excelled in personating Othello and Jaffier. In private life he was somewhat licentious. He married the daughter of Sir William Barkham, and after her death formed a *liaison* with Miss Mountfort, whom he deserted for Miss Saintlow, the lady he afterwards married. Miss Mountfort sank into a fit of despondency, and mental derangement ensued. A strange story is related of her while in this state. Ophelia had been one of her favourite characters ; and one day, hearing that "Hamlet" was to be performed that evening, she escaped from her keeper, hid herself in the theatre, and pushed on the stage before the actress who was to play that part. There was an actual Ophelia before the spectators, and the way in which she sang her wild snatches of song must have been only too truthful. There is no account of the effect of this incident upon the audience. Whatever pleasure there may be in witnessing such scenes, must consist in a consciousness of the illusion : the sad reality could only cause unmitigated pain.

Booth was the fortunate man selected to play Cato in Addison's famous play, and the auspicious circumstance was the crowning event in his career. It filled his purse, overwhelmed him with popularity, and introduced him to a share in the management of the theatre; but it spoilt him as an actor, and he became so negligent that, while playing Othello one evening, a message was sent to him from a private box, to ask if he was acting merely for his own amusement. In private life he was cheerful, generous, fond of conviviality, though somewhat diffident. In person he was short but well-made, with an air of dignity and the great advantage of large muscles, so that the play of his features was distinctly discernible even in the gallery.

He died in May, 1733, in the fifty-third year of his age, bequeathing all his property to his widow; a sum, however, considerably less than the portion she had brought to him on her marriage.

JOHN VERBRUGGEN. The date of this actor's life or death is uncertain. He was hanging about Drury Lane at the time that Cibber was seeking employment there. On the death of Montfort, he succeeded him in his part of Alexander, and was so successful, that he assumed the appellation as a surname for some years. In person he was tall and well-made, with a slight malformation in his knees, which gave him a shambling gait. This defect, however, he turned to his advantage, and rendered positively becoming on the stage. His principal characters were Bajazet, Oronooko, Edgar in "King Lear," Artaxerxes in "The Ambitious Step-mother," Loveless in "The Relapse," Wilmore in "The Rover," Cassius, and others.

The acting of Verbruggen has been contrasted with that of Betterton as the realization of untutored nature in opposition to the perfection of art. However false such a description may be, yet it conveys a tolerably accurate idea of their respective styles. Two of the most exquisite pieces of acting ever beheld on the stage were Verbruggen and Betterton as Cassius and Brutus; and Verbruggen and Mrs. Bracegirdle as Wilmore and Helena in Mrs. Afra Behn's play of "The Rover." In the latter piece, Verbruggen's "untaught airs, and the smiling repartees" of Mrs. Bracegirdle, had an extraordinary effect upon the audience, who appeared in constant fear that the performers were in earnest, and that each moment they would quit the stage.

He married Mrs. Montfort, a beautiful woman, and a most accomplished actress.

Mrs. Barry. A stately person, a graceful carriage, a melodious and powerful voice, and a well-trained understanding constituted Mrs. Barry's inducements to try her fortune on the stage. She was the daughter of Edward Barry, a barrister, afterwards called Colonel Barry, from his having raised a regiment of horse for the service of King Charles. His ruin was involved in that of his royal master, and his family were compelled to trust to their own exertions for their future subsistence. Lady Davenant, who had known the Colonel in his prosperous days, took charge of his daughter Elizabeth, superintended her education, and in the year 1673 obtained her admission into the Duke's company. After a year's trial, her talents were deemed so inferior, and her progress was so slow, that she was discharged as being a burden on the *troupe*. Through Lady Davenant's interest, she obtained a further trial, and received a second and a third dismissal for the same reasons. Such rebuffs might have daunted the most sanguine mind, but Mrs. Barry had resolved to succeed and did. Her principal defect was in the ear; but by the most untiring assiduity she so far perfected that organ, as to bring it into unison with her other extraordinary faculties, and when Otway brought his "Alcibiades" on the stage, she was included in the cast, and reaped the reward of her labours in the unexpected applause she commanded. Her spirited performance of Mrs. Lovitt, in Etheredge's "Man of the Mode" extorted universal commendation, and in 1680, her Monimia in Otway's "Orphan" fixed her future fame. Her Belvidera in "Venice Preserved," and her Isabella in Southerne's "Fatal Marriage," were exhibitions of the highest art; and the epithet of "famous" was so universally applied to her, that it became her distinguishing title. She was equally eminent in depicting the wildest passion and the most winning tenderness. Her outbursts of resentment or

despair were terrible to witness; but when she attuned her voice to the utterance of love, or pity, or virgin sorrow, she laid, as it were, a spell on her audience, and melted or soothed them with the easy mastery of some superior being.

Her private life accorded not with the superiority of her public merits, and there seems little reason to doubt her criminal connection with the notorious Earl of Rochester. Though we cannot palliate, yet we may drop a veil over the errors of a beautiful and gifted woman, exposed to severe temptation; and regret that genius should ever stoop to vitiate its fairest title to respect. She died on the 7th of March, 1713, aged fifty-three, and was buried in the churchyard of Acton.

Mrs. Bracegirdle. But few records remain of the career and the triumphs of Mrs. Bracegirdle. The time and place of her birth are alike uncertain. Her powers as an actress were of the highest order, and her forte lay in genteel comedy. She excelled in male characters, "and her gait or walk," says her biographer, "was free, manlike, and modest in breeches." For years she was a reigning toast, and dramatic writers vied with each other in studying her powers, and in adapting their pieces to her peculiar excellencies. She was included in all the plays of Rowe and Congreve, who each endeavoured to captivate the heart of their idol by love speeches placed in the mouths of her fictitious adorers on the stage.

Her figure was finely proportioned. She was of a dark complexion, with dark brown hair and eyebrows, black eyes, and a most expressive countenance. In private life she was gentle, modest, and charitable. Though surrounded by admirers, scandal has not fastened on any impropriety in her behaviour; and "her virtue had its reward both in applause and specie." She retired from

the stage about thirty years before Garrick appeared, induced in a measure by the more general approbation with which a younger rival (Mrs. Oldfield) acted some of her favourite characters. She died on the 12th of September, 1748, after having lived to an advanced age, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

## REVEREND LAURENCE EUSDEN.

Shadwell was the first of the second-rate laureates under whose dynasty the wits were in opposition. But his plays manifest considerable ability, and he was a brilliant conversationalist.

Tate enjoyed a good reputation among contemporaries. Rowe was a first-rate translator, and a man of genius and taste. We must now descend a great many steps, ay, almost to the bottom of the ladder. Horace Walpole has observed that nations are most commonly saved by the worst men in them, and so the Laureateship was in this instance preserved and handed down by perhaps our worst poet. In a small biographical dictionary he is described as no "inconsiderable versifier," and a writer must be in the last state of the "lues Boswelliana," did he give any lengthened account of works which had so justly merited oblivion, or were he very enthusiastic in speaking of the Rev. Laurence Eusden. Of good Irish family, and the son of Dr. Eusden, of Spotisworth, in Yorkshire, he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, entered holy orders, and was chaplain to Lord

Willoughby de Broke. At Rowe's death, December 1718, Eusden was appointed his successor. The Duke of Newcastle was Lord Chamberlain at the time. The "versifier" had won the favour of that nobleman, by a poem addressed to him on his marriage with Lady Henrietta Godolphin. He had, however, other claims to the office of "the birthday fibber," for, besides propitiating the Lord Chamberlain by his far-fetched flatteries of him and his bride, he had published a poetical epistle to Mr. Addison, on the accession of the King to the throne. It is a tedious panegyric on George II. That monarch, he tells us, was, as a child, marvellously precocious; as a man, glorious from his heroic exploits. The banks of the Rhine are said to echo his praises. He had given names to mountains by his warlike deeds. The eulogy terminates with this sublime couplet:

> "Streams which in silence flowed obscure before,
> Swell'd by thy conquests, proudly learn'd to roar."

He had also, in 1717, followed this up with three poems of a similar character. The first, "Sacred to the Memory of the Late King," is an apotheosis of George I. The second, another laudation of George II., and as full of fulsome fustian as the former one. Take, for example, the four following lines:

> "Hail, mighty Monarch! whom Desert alone
> Would, without Birthright, raise up to the throne;
> Thy virtues shine peculiarly nice,
> Ungloom'd with a confinity to vice."

The third is to the Queen, and teems with servile adulation and tiresome triplets.

His appointment has very justly filled with indignation contemporaneous and succeeding writers. It is asserted by some, that no better man would accept office. More correctly is it stated by others that he owed his prefer-

ment to his unblushing flatteries of royalty and to the favour of the Lord Chamberlain. At any rate he did not escape the usual quantity of sarcasms, which have ensued on even fairer appointments to the laurel. Pope put him into "The Dunciad." Cooke, the translator of Hesiod, who has himself a place in Pope's great satire, assailed him in "The Battle of the Poets," a clever poem, which deserves to be better known than it now is. The author was a man of considerable ability, a poet, scholar, and political pamphleteer. He is the man of whom Dr. Johnson said, that he lived twenty years on a translation of Plautus, for which he was always taking in subscriptions. It is also told of him, that he once presented Foote to a club, with the following introduction: "This is the nephew of the gentleman who was lately hung in chains for murdering his brother." "The Battle of the Poets," though different in plan, may have been suggested to Cooke by the Frogs, of Aristophanes, or "The Rehearsal." It is a contest of the poets of his day for precedence.

Hermes is sent to invite them to the struggle.

> "He spoke, and Hermes, quick at his command,
> Conveyed the message to the Muse's land,
> All thank'd the God for his indulgence shown,
> For all were certain of the Laurel Crown."

Then follows an invocation, quite after the epic fashion; and throughout a mock-heroic dignity is sustained in a very diverting manner.

Pope is thus described:

> "First on the plain a mighty General came,
> In merit great, but greater still in fame,
> In shining arms advanced, and Pope his name.
> A ponderous helm he wore, adorn'd with care,
> And for his plume Belinda's ravish'd hair.
> Arm'd at all points the warrior took the field,
> With Windsor's forest painted on his shield."

The Second Book opens with the attack on our Laureate versifier:

> "While in the Camp retir'd both armies lay,
> Some panting, others fearful of the day,
> Eusden, a laurell'd Bard by fortune rais'd,
> By very few been read, by fewer prais'd,
> From place to place forlorn and breathless flies,
> And offers bribes immense for strong allies.
> In vain he spent the day—the night in vain,
> For all the Laureate and his bribes disdain.
> With heart dejected he return'd alone,
> Upon the banks of Cham to make his moan,
> Resolv'd to spend his future days in ease,
> And only toil in verse himself to please;
> To fly the noisy Candidates of Fame,
> Nor ever court again so coy a Dame."

Eusden has not been spared in prose or verse. Oldmixon, who was in all probability chagrined at not being preferred to the Bays himself, speaks thus of him in his "Art of Logic and Rhetoric:" "That of all the galimatias he ever met with, none came up to the verses of this poet, which have as much of the Ridiculum and Fustian in them as can well be jumbled together, and are of that sort of nonsense which so perfectly confounds all ideas that there is no distinct one left in the mind." Again he tells us "that the putting the Laurel on the head of one who writ such verses, will give futurity a very lively idea of the judgment and justice of those who bestowed it."

The Duke of Buckingham made his appointment the subject of some amusing stanzas, called, in the third edition of that nobleman's works, published in 1740, "The Election of a Poet-Laureat," but better known as "The Session of the Poets." A few of the verses we must quote:

> "A famous Assembly was summoned of late,
> To crown a new Laureat came Phœbus in state,
> With all that Montfaucon himself could desire,
> His Bow, Laurel, Harp, and abundance of Fire.

"At Bartlemew Fair ne'er did Bullies so justle,
No country Election e'er made such a bustle:
From Garret, Mint, Tavern, they all post away,
Some thirsting for Sack, some ambitious of Bay."

Pope, Prior, Cibber, and Durfy arrive. Then

"Lampooners and Criticks rush'd in like a tide,
Stern Dennis and Gildon came first side by side,
Apollo confess'd that their lashes had stings,
But Beadles and Hangmen were never chose Kings."

There follows a description of Steele; and then

"Lame Congreve, unable such things to endure,
Of Apollo begg'd either a crown or a cure;
To refuse such a writer Apollo was loth,
And almost inclin'd to have granted him both."

The Duke next describes his own arrival:

"When Buckingham came he scarce car'd to be seen,
Till Phœbus desir'd his old friend to walk in,
But a Laureat Peer had never been known,
The Commoners claim'd that place as their own.

"Yet if the kind God had been e'er so inclin'd
To break an old rule, yet he well knew his mind,
Who, of such preferment, would only make sport,
And laugh'd at all suitors for places at Court."

Apollo is so perplexed by the various conflicting claims of the congregated Bards, that in despair he confers the laurel on a spectator, described as

"A hater of verse, a despiser of plays,"

And while all stand astounded at the election, this *nodus* is untied by the sudden advent of our "not inconsiderable versifier:"

"At last rush'd in Eusden, and cried, who shall have it
But I the true Laureat, to whom the King gave it?
Apollo begg'd pardon, and granted his claim,
But vowed, that till then, he had ne'er heard his name."

And so the squib goes off.

Before Eusden gave the world the poems which have

been mentioned as probably gaining for him this office, he published in 1714 a set of verses, which he had written and recited at the Public Commencement at Cambridge. When it is remembered that these limping heroics were spoken to an audience, partly composed of ladies, and chiefly addressed to them, their licence seems astonishing. Any extract we might give, would in this age of refinement infallibly place this work in the Index Expurgatorius of all fathers of families. And yet these prurient lines which we dare not quote, but which the curious may see in the Library of the British Museum, were specially composed and repeated for the edification and amusement of some of the noblest and fairest of our great-great-grandmothers. In 1718, Eusden addressed a poem to Her Royal Highness on the birth of a Prince. He soon after produced an "Ode for the New Year." In 1722 three pieces followed; one to the Lord Chancellor on his being created Earl of Macclesfield; the second to Lord Parker on his return from his travels; the third to that nobleman on his matrimonial alliance with Mrs. Mary Lane. What the character of these lucubrations is, some idea may be formed from the nature of their subjects. The warmth of admiration and fervour of flattery is always above fever-heat: the merit below zero.

In Nicholl's select collection his best poems are to be found, and among them some of his translations. Had he employed himself in giving versions of a few of the master-pieces of antiquity, he would have merited a better fame than can be acquired by feeble flatteries of kings and nobles. In translation, he displays some command of language and smoothness of versification. He assisted in a version of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," in which Dryden, Congreve, Addison, Tate, and others were his coadjutors. The whole of one book is by his hand, and so is the story of "Venus and Adonis" in

the tenth. Early in life, he had gained the esteem and patronage of Lord Halifax by translating into Latin his poem "On the Battle of the Boyne." He also gave a Latin version of Lord Roscommon's "Essay on Translated Verse." He contributed to "The Guardian" two translations from Claudian. In "The Spectator" he wrote a "Letter on Idols."

Little is known of the life of Eusden; he appears to have retired to the living of Coningsby in Lincolnshire, where he took to drinking and translating Tasso. Gray, in a letter to Mason, writes: "Eusden was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken parson." However much "bemused with beer," his inebriety did not altogether obstruct his literary labours, for he left behind him a manuscript translation of Tasso, with a Life of that Poet.

He died September 27, 1730.

The reader will, we fear, agree with us that more than enough has been said of this versifier. Though a clumsy courtier, his flatteries gained for him in that era patronage. In the present one, his powers of puffery would have been turned to a different account. He might have exhausted imagination in celebrating the virtues of blacking, or the praises of cheap clothing.

## COLLEY CIBBER.

Colley Cibber was eminent among his contemporaries as an actor, a dramatic writer, and a successful theatrical manager; to us he is better known as the hero of "The Dunciad." He was born in Southampton Street, Strand, the 6th of November, 1671. His father, Caius Gabriel Cibber, or Cibert, a statuary by profession, was a native of Flensburg, in the Duchy of Holstein. He settled in England a short time previous to the Restoration, and became carver to the King's closet. To him we owe the bas-relief on the monument on Tower Hill, and the figures of Melancholy and Raving Madness at Bethlehem Hospital. He was twice married; his second wife was a member of one of those families whose fortunes were wrecked through their faithful adherence to the cause of the Stuarts, and her grandfather, Sir Anthony Colley, at the close of the civil war, found his patrimony diminished from £3000 to £300 a-year. Colley Cibber was the fruit of this second marriage.

When about ten years old he was sent to the free school of Grantham, in Lincolnshire, where he remained

five years, and the slender stock of classical learning he there acquired, received little increase from study in after life. At school he was noted for conceit, carelessness, and quickness. He once received punishment for a bad theme, while his master, at the same time, announced that in parts it far exceeded in merit any that his competitors had produced. At the coronation of King James II. the school petitioned for a holiday; the request was granted, provided an ode were first composed on the event. The boys were disheartened, but Cibber undertook the task and completed it in half an hour. His vanity, however, was so offensive on the occasion, that his schoolfellows excluded him from a pastime in which he was most desirous to participate.

In 1687 his father took him from school, and sent him to stand at the election of scholars at Winchester, where, through the descent on the mother's side from the founder, William of Wykeham, he trusted to have obtained his admittance. Good easy man! His soul must have been too much absorbed in his art, to have had time to contemplate the peculiarities of English manners. "Had he," says Cibber, "tacked a direction to my back and sent me by the carrier to the mayor of the town, to be chosen Member of Parliament there, I might have had just as much chance to have succeeded in the one as the other." A friendless boy presenting himself, without interest or recommendations, at the door of any of our munificent foundations for indigent scholars, would not be likely to excite much consideration. This, however, would result from the coldness and pride of our national character, and if there was blame on this occasion it lay not with the institution but with the father.

The refusal taught him a lesson, and the second son profited by the mishap of the elder. He exerted himself; the present of a statue of the founder was convincing

as to his worth; and the younger brother became a scholar at Winchester, and died a fellow of New College. The want of academical training is visible in the whole future career of Cibber, and his moral character suffered by being thrown, thus undisciplined, among the shifting quicksands of London life. The instant he heard of his failure, he hastened back to London, intent on spending an evening at the theatre before giving an account of himself at home. As he gazed upon the mimic scene, and heard the burst of applause that greeted each favourite actor, his heart heaved with emotion, and he pined to share that tinsel splendour and that empty approbation. He longed to become an actor, but suppressed, he says, "the bewitching ideas of so sublime a station," through dread of his father's displeasure. Fearing the temptation might become too strong if he remained within its immediate influence, he wrote to his father, requesting he might not have to wait another year for an election at Winchester, when he might only encounter a second disappointment, but proceed at once to the University. His father, who was occupied at Chatsworth, under the Earl of Devonshire, seemed inclined to accede to his wishes, and as he had some years before made some sculptures for Trinity College, he trusted his acquaintance with some of the Heads of Houses might be of service in settling young Colley at Cambridge.

Some months, however, elapsed, and to put a stop to his idleness in London, he was summoned to Chatsworth. On reaching Nottingham he found his father in arms, under the Earl, who had raised some troops in favour of William, Prince of Orange. As the old sculptor could make but an indifferent soldier, his son was readily accepted as his substitute, and he entered upon his new career with high glee. "At this crisis," he remarks, with his customary conceit, "it will be observed that the fate of

King James, and of the Prince of Orange, and of myself were all at once upon the anvil." He had had but a few days to admire himself in his gay costume, when news arrived that, on the defection of the Prince of Denmark, the Princess Anne, fearing her father's resentment, had withdrawn herself by night from London, and was hastening towards Nottingham; and the report that two thousand of the King's dragoons were in hot pursuit, threw the new levies into a state of painful consternation. They scrambled to arms, and advanced with precipitation along the London road. Before they had proceeded many miles they met the Princess journeying leisurely in a coach, attended only by Lady Churchill, afterwards the famous Duchess of Marlborough, and Lady Fitzhardinge. The recruits, on being assured that no dragoons were in pursuit, turned gallantly back; and escorted Her Highness into Nottingham, with a calm consciousness of superior valour.

In the evening, the nobility and principal personages in the neighbourhood supped with the Princess. There being some dearth of attendants, Cibber's services were requested, and the post assigned to him was to wait on the Lady Churchill. Fifty years later, Cibber, in language of inflated exaggeration, described the effect the lofty Sarah's beauty produced upon his heart that evening. "All my senses were collected into my eyes, which, during the whole entertainment, wanted no better amusement than of stealing now and then the delight of gazing on the object so near me." Nor does the lapse of half a century seem to have chilled the warmth of his admiration. "A person," says he, "so attractive; a husband so memorably great; an offspring so beautiful; a fortune so immense; and (a title, which when royal favour had no higher to bestow, she could only receive from the Author of nature) a great-grandmother without grey hairs!

These are such consummate indulgences that we might think Heaven has centred them all in one person, to let us see how far, with a lively understanding, the full possession of them could contribute to human happiness."

On the establishment of the new dynasty, Cibber was one of the first who accepted a discharge. "Of all the comedians who have appeared on the stage in my memory," says Chesterfield, in after years, "no one has taken a kicking with such humour as our excellent Laureate," and the sarcasm will tend to explain how so short a campaign served to dissipate his martial predilections. His father's patron was now in high favour at court, and Cibber, at his instigation, drew up a petition to that nobleman, asking him for some appointment. The duke (for he had been rewarded with this advance in the peerage) told his father to send him to London, and indirectly undertook to provide for him. He waited there five months, and had some prospect of employment in the office of the secretary of state; but having now an opportunity of indulging his theatrical tastes, his inclination towards the stage increased in intensity till it assumed the shape of an absorbing passion. "I saw no joy in any other life than that of an actor," says he; "'twas on the stage alone I had formed a happiness preferable to all that camps or courts could offer me, and there was I determined, let father and mother take it as they pleased, to fix my *non ultra*." Accordingly, he appended himself to the company at Drury Lane, then the only theatre open in London.

The patentees had established a harsh though wholesome regulation, to the effect that no novice should receive pay before undergoing a probation of six months. Master Colley, as he was called, waited full three quarters of a year in anxious suspense, but no one in authority deigned to notice him. At length he was fixed upon to carry

a message on the stage, and he could not control his emotion at having at last an opportunity of distinguishing himself. As the eventful moment approached, however, he grew so timid, and in the end acquitted himself so ill, that the whole scene was disconcerted by his awkwardness. Betterton asked angrily who the fellow was that had so bungled. "Master Colley," was the reply. "Master Colley, then forfeit him." "Why, Sir, he has no salary," said the prompter. "No?" said Betterton, "then put him down ten shillings, and forfeit him five." This, Cibber tells us, he thought "a most plentiful accession, and himself the happiest of mortals. Not Alexander himself," says he, "nor Charles XII. of Sweden, when at the head of their victorious armies, could feel a greater transport in their bosoms, than I did then in mine, when but in the rear of this troop of comedians."

The first part in which he obtained any decided success was in the Chaplain, in Otway's play of "The Orphan." He was almost overpowered with delight on the occasion, and the praise of Goodman at rehearsal took away his breath, and drew tears from his eyes. A most extraordinary story is told of this Goodman. Finding his salary as an actor too small to satisfy the demands of his appetites, he boldly took to the highway, as a means of increasing his income. Being convicted of his crime, he was fortunate enough to obtain a pardon from King James. Goodman was so impressed with this instance of the royal clemency, that years afterwards, in 1696, he offered to assassinate William III., in order to testify his gratitude!

Cibber's success was assured by an event which brought him forward in a prominent part. The Queen had commanded "The Double Dealer" to be played. Kynaston was to act the part of Lord Touchwood, but before the evening of representation arrived, that eminent actor fell ill and was unable to perform. By Congreve's advice,

his part, after much misgiving, was assigned to Cibber, and the author's judgment was vindicated by the brilliant way in which Cibber depicted the character. His salary was thereupon increased to twenty shillings a-week.

He was not two-and-twenty when he thought himself prosperous enough to marry. Miss Shore was the object of his choice. Her father was so enraged at the match, that he squandered most of his property in building a retreat on the Thames, afterwards known as Shore's Folly, but which has long since been pulled down. He was reconciled to them, however, before he died, and left them some poor remnant of his once handsome fortune. Cibber's income at this juncture consisted of £20 a-year allowed by his father, and twenty shillings a-week, his salary as an actor. "To complete his fortune," he now tells us, "he turned poet." His constitutional hilarity of disposition bore him up through all his difficulties; but the managers were tardy in appreciating his merits, and his advance was slow.

On the secession of Betterton, Mrs. Barry and others, to the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, he received an increase of pay, to keep him from following in the train of the disaffected. The company by this rupture was reduced to the most grievous straits, as they had to withstand the competition of those who had hitherto proved their chief source of attraction. One part of the tactics of the rival theatres was to play the same pieces against each other, and thus try to outdo each other in the public favour by superiority of acting. The play that was first chosen to exhibit the respective merits of the antagonists, was Congreve's "Old Bachelor." Powell was to mimic Betterton in Heartwell, and, after some hesitation, the part of Fondlewife was entrusted to Cibber. Dogget had acquired great popularity in that character—so great, indeed, that the part and the actor were inseparably connected

in the public mind. Cibber, instead of striking out a new line for himself, which might jar with the public conception of the part, attempted the most minute imitation of Dogget, in voice, manner, face, and deportment. And so perfect was the resemblance, that many for some time thought it was Dogget himself on the stage, and the sight of that veteran actor in the pit, afforded no small gratification to the vanity of the successful copyist.

Still the verdict of the public was not responded to by the manager. If Cibber asked for a part different to what he had been accustomed to play, he was met with the chill rebuff that "it was not in his way." A remonstrance of his, in reply to some such observation, is worthy the attention both of actors and managers. "I thought," said he, "anything naturally written ought to be in any one's way that pretended to be an actor." This was thought then, as no doubt it would be now, an instance of conceit; and it is because the truth of this remark is not sufficiently recognised, that we see so much comic power degenerating into buffoonery, and authors pandering to an actor's oddities instead of studying truth and nature. In 1695, Cibber offered a play of his own, called "Love's Last Shift," which, through the intervention of Southerne, author of "Oronooko," was brought out in January of this year. This piece was afterwards translated into French, under the whimsical heading of "La dernière chemise de l'amour."

Southerne, though he thought highly of the play, had a less favourable opinion of the author's powers as an actor. "Young man, I pronounce thy play a good one," was his observation. "I will answer for its success if thou dost not spoil it by thy own action." Cibber had given himself the part of Sir Novelty Fashion, which was written to ridicule the tone of foppery then prevalent. The piece gave proofs of such ability, that Lord Dorset, the then

Lord Chamberlain—and no bad judge in such matters —said that "it was the best first play that any author, in his memory, had produced; and for a young fellow to show himself such an actor and such a writer in one day was something extraordinary." Sir John Vanbrugh was so pleased with the play and the actor, that he wrote his "Relapse" as a sequel to it, and requested the principal character, Lord Foppington, might be given to Cibber.

It may seem strange that our hero, a man of slight principle, should, as an author, commence his career as a reformer of the immorality of the stage. Writing from reading, rather than from observation, he contrived to extract purity from impurity; and with materials borrowed from Etheredge and other licentious writers, produced a play in which, contrary to the prevalent fashion, propriety was not made ridiculous. Vanbrugh, however, true to the older instincts, in his "Relapse," endeavoured to neutralize the wholesome effect of such a production; and, with much wit and pleasantry, to degrade virtue from her novel elevation.

Cibber, in the meantime, was unceasing in his efforts to gain applause as an actor, and his long and patient study obtained its deserved success. He appeared, with considerable approbation, in the characters of Iago, Wolsey, Richard III., and others; but in tragic parts he never attained the excellence he had exhibited in comedy. His voice was deficient in depth and volume; and so important is voice in tragedy, that it may be doubted whether all other qualifications will not go for nothing if that one be wanting.

In 1697, he produced "Woman's Wit, or the Lady in Fashion," which was but coolly received. His first play seems to have exhausted his stock of reading and observation, which he had not had as yet sufficient time to replenish. His next effort, "Xerxes," a tragedy, was likewise a failure.

In a paper in "The Tatler," Steele has a sly joke on the premature fate of this play. Among the items in a theatrical inventory are "The imperial robes of Xerxes, never worn but once." In fact, our author evidently mistook his powers if he expected to excel in tragedy, for which neither his studies nor the original constitution of his mind, in the least degree, fitted him.

In the following year (1700), he had a salve for his wounded vanity in the great success of his new comedy of "Love makes the Man, or the Fop's Fortune," which was brought out at Drury Lane. In the same year, he altered Shakespeare's "King Richard III." for the stage; but the licenser cut out the whole of the first act, not allowing "the small indulgence of a speech or two, that the other four acts might limp on with a little less absurdity." This slashing application of the knife was occasioned by the zeal of the Master of the Revels for the existing order of things, fearing lest the people might be reminded by the miseries of King Henry VI. of the condition of their exiled King James; so firm, at that time, was Whig reliance in the vaunted popularity of the glorious Revolution.

The division among the players, which we shall enter into more particularly in a succeeding page, had been attended with serious results to both parties. Free trade in the drama was, by no means, a successful experiment in those days; and the miseries to which the two companies were reduced by their competition has been graphically depicted by Cibber himself, who was one of the sufferers. The actors were seldom paid more than half their nominal salaries, and sometimes performed for six weeks together without receiving a day's pay; and Cibber, in these straits, found the proceeds of his pen a most welcome supply. "It may be observable, too," says he, "that my muse and my spouse were equally prolific,

that the one was seldom the mother of a child, but in the same year the other made me the father of a play. I think we had a dozen of each between us, of both which kinds some died in their infancy, and near an equal number of each were alive when I quitted the theatre."

In 1703, his comedy, "She would and she would not, or the Kind Impostor," was brought out at Drury Lane; and, in the following year, he produced "The Careless Husband," which, it is generally conceded, is by far the best of his productions. Pope has adverted to the high esteem in which this piece was held in his Imitations from Horace:

> "The people's voice is odd;
> It is, and it is not, the voice of God.
> To Gammer Gurton if it give the bays,
> And yet deny The Careless Husband praise."

This work is a master-piece in its way, and presents, perhaps, the most favourable specimen of Cibber's genius. Congreve used to say of him, that his plays had many things that looked like wit but were not wit. Certainly he was deficient in that unrivalled felicity, which could dispose each gem in the setting that would best set off its lustre; but, on the other hand, his dialogue gained in ease, and, if less striking, was more natural, and did not seem a mere vehicle for the introduction of choice sayings. "The Careless Husband" owes little to plot or incident. The characters are not such as would at first sight excite much interest, and the broader features of comedy are wanting. The manners are those of fashionable life, which are apt to pall when continued unrelieved through a lengthened performance, and the whole *dramatis personæ* are but seven; but there is a polish and a grace pervading the whole composition which charms the spectator; and the attention is kept alive, and curiosity

excited throughout, to a degree which evidences the hand of a master.

In 1706 he again attempted a tragedy, and brought out his "Perolla and Isadore," which ran a week and then sank into oblivion. His two comedies, "The Double Gallant, or the Sick Lady's Cure," and "The Lady's Last Stake, or the Wife's Resentment," followed during the subsequent year.

The former of these two plays, through caprice or mismanagement, was not a favourite on its first appearance; but on its revival two years afterwards, its merits were better appreciated, and it became a stock play. The latter showed talent, but this perpetual harping on the same string began to tire. The follies of fashionable life admitted not of much variety, and Cibber detecting the changing sentiments of his auditors, turned to other sources of interest.

Owen Swiney had now taken the theatre in the Haymarket, upon some understanding with Rich, the most influential of the patentees of Drury Lane. Rich had excepted to his engaging Cibber, but without avail, as, on some dispute between the two, Cibber, thinking himself ill-used, left Rich and joined Swiney. The two theatres, however, coalesced in the following year, when as his friend, Colonel Brett, had obtained a share in the patent, Cibber returned to Drury Lane. This was the Brett who married the Countess of Macclesfield, the reputed mother of Savage. In 1709, on the suspension of the privileges of the patent by the Lord Chamberlain, Cibber, in conjunction with Wilks, Dogget, and Mrs. Oldfield, returned to the Haymarket, where two years afterwards he obtained a share in the management; and his vanity, his most prominent characteristic through life, was in a flutter of excitement on the occasion. He became joint patentee of Drury Lane, being associated with Collier, Wilks, and Dogget.

His conduct as a manager presents the brightest side of his character. The judgment and resolution he displayed, strange in one of so mercurial a temperament, the mismanagement he corrected, the difficulties he overcame by his marvellous equanimity and perseverance, and the strict punctuality he observed in all pecuniary engagements, constituted him, in the opinion of one well competent to judge, "a character of as singular utility to the theatre as any that ever existed."

We embrace so tempting an opportunity to suspend the narrative, in order to present to the reader a rapid sketch of theatrical history from the time of Davenant to the final retirement of Cibber.

As we have observed in a preceding memoir, at the Restoration two companies were established by royal letters patent. In the dearth of existing dramatic talent, their principal resource lay in the older writers, and particularly in the works of Shakespeare, Jonson, Massinger, and Fletcher, with the understood proviso that the two theatres should never bring out the same play at the same time.

In the rivalry of competition, Davenant, probably during a temporary depression, called in auxiliary aid, and by opera, masque, and spectacle, outran his competitor in public favour. Killegrew took up the same weapons, and angry altercations arose between the two companies, while both seemed on the verge of ruin.

In 1684, Betterton, who had succeeded Davenant in the management, to put a stop to these dissensions, proposed a union. A suspension of hostilities was agreed upon, and the companies united under Davenant's patent. This, with the dormant one of Killegrew, had all the properties of personal estate. Davenant bequeathed it to his son Charles; he assigned it to his brother Alexander, who sold it to Christopher Rich, a lawyer. From Rich it went

to his son, who devised it to his four daughters, of whom it was purchased by Colman and others.

At the junction of the two companies, they performed at Drury Lane under the title of the King's Company, and cheered themselves with the flattering assurance of comfortable success. In this, however, they were speedily deceived. The management, freed from the spur of competition, grew lax and negligent, audiences decreased, and while the patentees dictated their own terms to the actors, they were unable to enjoy their monopoly in peace among themselves. Of the twenty shares into which the profits were divided, ten had been appropriated to the proprietors, and the remaining ten, in certain proportions, to the actors. The proprietors who took the one moiety were likewise ten in number. These, impelled by whim or necessity, sold their shares or parts of their shares; and thus money-lenders and speculators were introduced into the management, who obtruded their voices and gave their votes on matters of which they knew absolutely nothing. The natural consequences ensued, receipts diminished, and the incompetent managers revenged their own folly on the helpless actors by diminishing their quota of the profits.

Betterton, who to save the two companies from ruin, had planned the coalition, now perceived that the remedy had become worse than the disease, and abetted by the principal performers, he, through the medium of Lord Dorset, represented their case to the consideration of King William III. The patentees, secure in their fancied rights, by the advice of Rich, maintained that by law no other patent could be granted. This assumption was stigmatized by the opposite party as a slight on the Prerogative; and the lawyers consulted by Betterton, unanimously gave as their opinion, that the grants of Charles interfered not in the slightest degree with the power of any succeeding Prince to confer similar privileges

at discretion. The patentees saw their error, and made overtures of reconciliation. At this crisis Queen Mary died, and the closing of the theatre gave Betterton time to mature his designs.

The opposite party, in the meantime, were not idle; they doubled the salaries of their actors, and beat up for recruits in all quarters. The principal performers, however, felt that the cause of Betterton was their own; they had an audience of the King, who promised them his protection, and were empowered by royal licence to open a theatre for themselves. Subscriptions were instantly set on foot to provide the necessary funds; there was no lack of popular sympathy, and they established themselves in the Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The patentees were necessarily beforehand, and commenced the campaign with Mrs. Behn's "Abdelazar, or the Moor's Revenge," the prologue to which was Cibber's first attempt in literature. In about a fortnight's time, such was the incredible diligence of Betterton, the rival house opened (April 13th, 1695) with Congreve's "Love for Love," and the success of this play was so unprecedented, that it sufficed of itself to keep the theatre afloat during the whole season.

Various devices were resorted to by the Drury Lane company to win back public favour. Rich, chagrined at the preference given to the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields by persons of distinction, and calculating on the influence servants possessed over the actions of their masters, resorted to the unworthy expedient of opening the gallery free to footmen and others, who had before been excluded altogether from the house. "If he did this to get applause," says Cibber, "he certainly succeeded, for it often thundered from the full gallery above, while the thin pit and scanty boxes below were in a state of perfect serenity." The privilege once accorded, became

a most formidable nuisance, and was with difficulty abolished.

Another device of this crafty lawyer was to admit "fast men" behind the scenes, sometimes on payment of money, sometimes gratis; and the same authority observes that, "the inconveniences of the custom we found so intolerable, when we afterwards had the stage in our hands, that at the hazard of our lives we were forced to get rid of them."

The tide of public favour, however, at first ran strongly with Betterton, but gradually "the novelty of encouraging merit wore off." The Drury Lane company, likewise, conscious of inferior talents, exerted themselves with the greater diligence; the actors and actresses were younger, and more ambitious of distinction. Cibber, Southerne, and Vanbrugh wrote for them; while Betterton's company, too confident in their merit and experience, flushed with success, grew slothful and negligent, and were in turn neglected.

Finding their popularity on the wane, they accused the capriciousness of the public, the public recriminated on their supineness, and when they followed the example of Drury Lane, in only paying the actors and *employés* as receipts fell in, their condemnation was unreserved.

It was about this time that Collier's famous book appeared.

Posturing and tumbling now became fashionable frivolities, in which the two theatres condescended to a degrading rivalry. Vanbrugh, for some cause unexplained, deserted Drury Lane, and projected a new theatre to be built in the Haymarket, with a more especial view in its construction to the requirements of opera and spectacle. The necessary powers were obtained, and the theatre was built in 1705. It opened with operas, the principal performers singing in Italian, the rest singing and reciting in English.

The situation of the theatre, however, was disadvantageous. Drury Lane, being near the city and the Inns of Court, the principal support of the theatres, felt the benefit of the propinquity. A walk along the ill-paved and worse-lighted Strand, was then a formidable undertaking, and cabs had not been invented.

In the following year Betterton, sinking in years, and finding his affairs in an unprosperous state, induced his fellows to dissolve partnership, and advised them to put themselves under Congreve and Vanbrugh at the Haymarket. Congreve declined the labour of management, Vanbrugh was unequal to it, and was desirous of amalgamating with Drury Lane. Rich, at the latter theatre, by incessant scheming, had absorbed nearly the whole proprietorship into his own hands. When he heard that Vanbrugh's new theatre was in the market, he grasped at that likewise, but, in his cunning, overreached himself. Under a formal verbal agreement, which he intended as a blind, he empowered one Swiney, whom he regarded as his tool, to treat with Vanbrugh as in his name, intending to take advantage of or to reject the bargain, according to the issue of the speculation. Swiney treated for it with Vanbrugh, and purchased it, ingratiated himself with several actors, was joined by Cibber and others, and then boldly pressed Rich to fulfil at once his part of the contract. This led to a rupture, and the credit of ingenuousness and fair dealing lay in public estimation with Swiney. Rich, instead of having an accomplice, had raised up a competitor.

The last remaining partner of any importance at Drury Lane had been Sir Thomas Skipwith. He, disgusted with Rich's meddling propensities, had presented his share to Colonel Brett. Brett began at once to busy himself at the theatre, and, being a man of fashion, endeavoured to raise the tone of the place. By Cibber's

advice, he proposed a partnership between the two theatres, which, through his interest with the Vice-Chamberlain, he was enabled to carry into effect. The terms were, that the performances at Drury Lane should be kept distinct, so that the former should confine itself to the drama, and spectacle and opera should be relegated to the latter. The agreement lasted but a year, for Rich, who delighted in confusion, and was jealous of all interference, opposed Brett in all his plans, frightened him by imaginary liabilities brought by fictitious claimants, and Skipwith was induced to resume his gift.

Rich, now autocrat of the theatrical world, began to torment the actors, who, as there was no hostile theatre to take refuge in, were obliged to submit to his perverseness; everything fell into confusion, and the manager was happy. The actors complained to the Lord Chamberlain, who issued an order to close the house. Meanwhile Swiney's powers were enlarged, and he treated with the ejected actors for the production of plays at the Haymarket. Cibber's influence had been strongly, though secretly at work through all these shifting circumstances. He had a marvellous keenness of vision, where his own interests were concerned, and possessed, or assumed an unruffled equanimity, which blinded all suspicion of his designs. He pursued his aim with that patient pertinacity which can almost compel success, and he now reaped the reward of his clear-sightedness. Rich's power was annihilated, an independent and powerful company was formed, and the Haymarket opened under the management of Wilks, Dogget, Mrs. Oldfield, and Cibber. Mrs. Oldfield soon retired upon a special allowance, and Cibber, by playing off his intractable coadjutors the one against the other, and making himself the referee upon all occasions of dispute, obtained the great object of his ambition, the entire and actual management.

Rich had hired Drury Lane, on the condition that he should pay £3 a-night while the house was open. As the house was now closed, and the payment of rent suspended, the proprietors, without cancelling his lease, granted another to one Collier, a lawyer, M.P. for Cornwall. By his interest at Court, he obtained a separate licence; and flourishing this lease and licence against Rich's lease and patent, he seized the occasion of a night of public rejoicing, and with a mob at his heels, broke into the house, and violently ejected the rightful tenant. In these prosaic times, how curiously do we look back upon those roystering days of tumultuous licence. This dashing feat actually overwhelmed Collier with popularity; and by the aid of Miss Santlowe's acting in "The Fair Quaker of Deal," his house filled nightly. Rich bowed, with a forced composure, to these strange and adverse circumstances, and turned his attention elsewhere.

Upon the dissolution of Betterton's company, he had taken a lease of the house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in order that no one else might open it; and he now fell back upon that property, and undertook to rebuild it. He died, however, before its completion, though his son afterwards opened it, and enjoyed there a prosperous career. It stood behind the present College of Surgeons, and the principal entrance was in Portugal Street. Here Quin played all his characters. Here Fenton produced his "Mariamne;" and Miss Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly Peachum, by her wit and sprightliness, here fascinated a ducal heart, and became afterwards Duchess of Bolton. Giffard, from Goodman's Fields, took it on lease in 1732. In 1756, it was transformed into a barrack. It was next converted into a china repository, and was taken down in August, 1848, to make room for the improvements in connection with the Royal College of Surgeons.

Cibber, at the Haymarket, was now sanguine in the anticipation of success; but unexpected circumstances balked his well-grounded expectations. Sacheverell's trial became the all-absorbing topic of interest, and Collier's success at Drury Lane materially interfered with his receipts. Eventually, however, the tide turned. Collier, as soon as his speculation began to fail, and Swiney's to succeed, coolly proposed an exchange, with the restoration of the old agreement, that Drury Lane should be appropriated to drama and the Haymarket to opera and spectacle. He succeeded in compelling the acceptance of this unfair proposal; when finding matters not at all mended by the change, he again audaciously availed himself of his enormous interest at Court to reverse his own imperious arrangement.

A fresh mandate was issued, Swiney was obliged to return to the Haymarket, and, in consequence, to retire to Boulogne, and expiated, by a twenty years' exile, Collier's tyranny and mismanagement. Everything went wrong, till Collier was bribed to abstain from interfering in any way with either of the theatres. He was paid £700 a-year to remain idle; and the three actors—Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget—began their celebrated management. The partnership commenced in 1711.

Cibber's tactics were those of a consummate general. Resigning the vulgar ambition of ostentatious power, he aimed to control, and direct its secret springs; and the perverse and self-opiniated co-managers were made unconsciously the mere puppets to work out his schemes. The obstinacy and tenacity of purpose of Wilks, the frowardness and meddling industry of Dogget, became mere instruments in his hands, which he pointed and used with consummate tact; but in nothing was his address more apparent or his efforts more laudable than in the financial department. Dogget was parsimonious, Wilks

inclined to expense. Cibber made the propensity of each a check on that of the other, and was himself so bent on equity and fair dealing, that, for the first time, perhaps, in theatrical management, for the space of twenty years, every tradesman's bill was paid directly it was sent in; and although, by a somewhat unusual arrangement, no written agreement was ever entered into with the actors, and the sums appended to their names on the pay-list were their only security, yet every one connected with the theatre received their dues without disputes, and with exemplary punctuality. Every Monday morning all claims were liquidated before a penny of the receipts were touched, and the managers could, in addition, afford to double the salaries of all their actors.

All was now smooth sailing, consequently there is little to record. One feature in the management may deserve the attention of contemporary actors and managers. These men—all, perhaps, exceeding in abilities any actors of the present day—never declined to take an insignificant part to strengthen the general cast of a play. Starring was not then the supercilious folly of every successful actor. The company accordingly worked together better, the gratification of the public was increased, while the actor himself gained in the variety and extended range of his powers. In 1714, Dogget, in a huff, retired to make way for Booth, who had acquired universal popularity by his performance of Cato, in Addison's play.

At the accession of George I., Cibber, with wary keenness, perceived a chance of ridding himself of Collier. Their licence being held at pleasure, on Queen Anne's death a renewal became necessary. Sir Richard Steele had great influence at Court, especially with the Duke of Marlborough. He had always manifested a strong predilection for the theatre, and had frequently eulogised the

actors in his papers in "The Tatler." Cibber resolved to play off Steele against Collier, and succeeded. Steele applied to the Duke, and through his influence, obtained a licence in the names of himself, Cibber, Wilks, and Booth; and, as with the change of ministers Collier's influence vanished, he was quietly thrown overboard.

Young Rich opened the new house in Lincoln's Inn Fields under his father's patent. Cibber preferring the permanency of a patent to the more temporary security of a licence, thought the present a favourable opportunity to apply for a similar privilege. He represented the case to Steele, and Steele obtained a patent for his own life and three years afterwards, which he assigned to Cibber, Wilks, and Booth, confirming their right in the entire property, reserving to himself a quarter of the profits. The patent was dated 19th Jan. 1715. The race was now between Cibber and the younger Rich. Cibber started with his usual skill and confidence, but suffered a temporary check by a clever though malicious *ruse* of his antagonist. A report was actively circulated that the edifice in Drury Lane was insecure, as the foundations were sinking. The rumour obtained such credit that the actors had to play to empty benches; and until an architect had formally surveyed the building, and published a written attestation of its security, Rich's company reaped the fruits of their audacious calumny.

As soon as Cibber gained upon his antagonist, Rich fell back upon artificial aid, and introduced those pantomimic performances which still retain possession of the stage. Cibber likewise, though much against his conscience, made auxiliaries of Pantaloon and Columbine, and the old game of Davenant and Killegrew was played over again. Rich, however, whose performances as Harlequin are still fmaous in theatrical annals, completely captivated the galleries,

and might have realized a handsome competence had not mismanagement always kept him poor.

The personages of the pantomime, though of recent introduction in this country, are of almost immemorial antiquity in their native Italy. Their expressive gestures were the delight of the ancient Romans, and disarmed the gravity of statesmen and philosophers. Through the changing manners of successive centuries, their characters underwent various modifications. In later times Harlequin especially degenerated from his early sprightliness and humour, until the comic muse of Goldoni re-invested him with his present attractions. We present an extract on this subject from the memoirs of that entertaining writer, which, we feel assured, no reader will blame for its length.

"Comedy, which has at all times been the favourite spectacle of civilized nations, had shared the fate of the arts and sciences, and been swallowed up in the ruin of empires, and the decline of letters; but the germ of comedy was never quite extinct in the fertile imagination of the Italians. The first who laboured to revive it being disappointed, during a dark age, in skilful writers, had the boldness to compose plans, to divide them into acts and scenes, and to utter as impromptus, conversations, thoughts, and pleasantries which were previously concerted. Those who could read (and the rich were not of the number) observed that the comedies of Plautus and Terence always contained fathers who were dupes, debauched sons, amorous girls, lying valets, and corrupt maid-servants; and, traversing the different cantons of Italy, they took their fathers at Venice and Bologna, their valets at Bergamo, their enamoured youths and maids, and their soubrettes in the states of Rome and Tuscany.

"We must not wait for written proofs of this reasoning, because we are speaking of an age in which writing was

nearly unknown; but I prove my assertion in this manner. The pantaloon has always been a Venetian, the doctor a Bolognese, and the harlequin and clown have ever been from Bergamo; from these places the actors took those comic characters which are known to us by the name of the four Italian masks. I advance these remarks not entirely from my own conception; I am in possession of a manuscript of the fifteenth century, in good preservation, bound in parchment, which contains a hundred and twenty subjects or canvases of Italian pieces, called comedies of the art, and of which the principal basis consists invariably of a pantaloon, a Venetian merchant; the doctor, a lawyer of Bologna; Brighella and Harlequin, valets of Bergamo; the first quick and active, the other heavy. Their antiquity and permanent existence prove their origin. With regard to their employment, the pantaloon and the doctor, whom the Italians call the two old men, represent the part of fathers or other venerable characters. The first is a merchant, because Venice was in those ancient times the richest and most extensive commercial country in Italy. He has ever preserved the ancient Venetian costume. The black robe and woollen bonnet are yet worn at Venice; while the red waistcoat, breeches cut like drawers, and red stockings and slippers represent exactly the dress of the ancient inhabitants of the Adriatic lagoons; and the beard, which was a great ornament in those distant ages, has been carried to a grotesque extreme in these latter days. The second old man, called the doctor, has been selected from the legal profession for the purpose of contrasting the learned with the commercial man; and he is from Bologna because an university existed in that city, which, with all the ignorance of the time, yet adhered to the charges and emoluments of professors. His dress preserves the ancient costume of the bar of Bologna, which is nearly the same to this hour; and the singular

mask which covers the forehead and nose, has been imitated from a wine mark which deformed the face of a lawyer in those days. This tradition yet exists among the amateurs of the comedy of art. The Brighella and Harlequin, called in Italy the two Zanies, have been borrowed from Bergamo. The adroitness of the first, and the extreme heaviness of the second, are proofs of this assertion; because in no other country do we find these two extremes in the class of the people. Brighella represents an intriguing, roguish, dishonest valet. His dress is a kind of livery; and his tawny mask is a satire on the complexion of the inhabitants of those lofty mountains, scorched by the heat of the sun. The Harlequins also have their different names; but they are always natives of Bergamo, heavy and clownish, and their dress represents a poor devil, who picks up pieces of different stuffs and colours to mend his clothes. The hat corresponds with their beggary, and the tail of a hare, with which it is decorated, is to this day the usual ornament of the peasants of Bergamo."

In this country the functions of the two last-mentioned characters have been reversed. The harlequin is the active personage, and the brighella is the clown or servant.

In 1720, Steele opposed some ministerial measure, and offended thereby the Duke of Newcastle. That nobleman, who was then all-powerful, summoned the patentees, and in a peremptory manner, required the resignation of their patent, offering to grant them a licence in its stead, which of course it would have been in his power to suspend at pleasure. The managers stoutly refused compliance. The Duke became angry, and threatened to close the theatres, but had the good sense to take no further notice of the matter. Dennis, a Whig, took up the cudgels in behalf of his patron, and with the usual consistency of his party, thus alludes to the liberties of Englishmen when they happen to

be actors. The language is as elegant as the sentiments are generous. "Actors in England," he writes, "have always been looked upon as vagabonds and rogues by statute, unless they have been under the protection of our kings, or some of our English peers; yet in this last case I have been credibly informed that for great misdemeanours they have been sent to Whitehall, and whipped at the porter's lodge, and I have heard Joe Haines (a celebrated actor) more than once ingenuously own that he had been twice whipped there. If Cibber in the days of King James, or King Charles I., had dared to treat a Lord Chamberlain with half the insolence that he has lately done the present, his bones would have been as bloody as his head is raw."

A few years after this incident Cibber figured in Westminster Hall as the defendant in a chancery suit, and acquitted himself with unusual adroitness and ability. Steele's improvidence had reduced him to frequent pecuniary straits, and he had found it convenient to borrow various sums of money from his co-patentees. His applications occurring, however, at continually lessening intervals, it was resolved to refuse all further advance until existing accounts could be arranged. Steele conceived such grave displeasure at this, that he entirely neglected his duties at the theatre, and left his share of the work to be performed by the rest at their convenience. The remaining managers accordingly undertook his duties, and appropriated to themselves £1 13*s.* 4*d.* a day each, as compensation for their additional labour. This arrangement was acted upon during the space of three years when Steele's creditors interfered. His affairs by this time were completely in the hands of the lawyers, and at their instance he was induced to file a bill in chancery to contest the right of the managers to retain any portion of his share of the profits. The cause came on for

hearing in 1726 before Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls. Cibber pleaded his case in person, and obtained the applause of all who heard him, and what, perhaps, he scarcely valued as much, a verdict in his favour. The triumph was the more flattering as the two opposite counsel were both men of note, who each afterwards successively rose to be Lord Chancellor of England.

In 1728, "The Beggar's Opera," written in ridicule of the Italian opera, and the effect of which was popularly said to make Rich gay and Gay rich, was brought out at Lincoln's Inn Fields. The play had been offered to Cibber, but by an oversight, committed occasionally by shrewd men of experience, he had declined it. The hint of the piece had been given by Swift, but Congreve, Pope, and Swift all doubted whether it would fail or succeed. During the first act they were still hesitating, when they heard the Duke of Argyll, who was in the next box, exclaim: "It will do, it must do, I see it in the eyes of them." Presently a burst of applause approved the keenness of the Duke's perception, and the enthusiasm increased till the fall of the curtain. The mania this piece excited throughout the country is incomprehensible. Ladies learnt the songs; scenes from it were painted on their fans, and adorned the walls of their houses, and the Italian opera was for a while exploded.

From this period Drury Lane declined. Steele died in the following year; Mrs. Oldfield in 1730. Booth fell ill; and in 1731 Wilks, too, died. These accumulated misfortunes so affected the reputation and efficiency of the theatre, that, though it made a vigorous effort, it never recovered its position until Garrick, some years afterwards, brought new powers into the field, and resuscitated the system that Cibber had so prosperously carried out. In 1732 the patent expired, and Cibber without much trouble obtained its renewal for twenty-one years, in behalf of

Booth, Mrs. Wilks, and himself. Booth sold a half of his share to a man named Highmore, who knew nothing of theatrical matters; Mrs. Wilks appointed one Ellis to act for her, who was equally unqualified, and Cibber foreseeing nothing but ruin, closed with an offer of Highmore, and sold his share for 3000 guineas. About this time, likewise, a rage for theatrical speculation sprang up. Odell built a theatre in Goodman's Fields, in 1729; Giffard another in 1732, and Rich opened the theatre in Covent Garden on the 7th of December of the same year.

Fielding, with his Great Mogul's Company, took the Haymarket, and the ferocious satires of that extraordinary writer induced the government to pass the celebrated bill limiting the number of theatres, and obliging all managers to submit their pieces to the supervision of a licenser.

We now recur to Cibber's dramatic career. After the comparative failure of his last play,* he was meditating what new line he could take up, when an event occurred which he had the skill to avail himself of, and he adroitly made a public calamity minister to his private benefit. The rebellion in Scotland, in favour of the Pretender, gave him the cue, and he accordingly made a formal and vigorous attack on Jacobitism in his play, "The Non-Juror," founded on the "Tartuffe," of Molière. His success was great, although such success depends more on the temper of the audience than the merit of the piece, and is always one-sided; for, though he pleased many, he offended many, who could still remain faithful to their earlier predilections. He acquired, however, a noisy popularity. Lintot, the publisher, gave him a hundred guineas for the copyright, an unprecedented price at that time; and on presenting a copy to King George I. his magnanimity did not restrain him from pocketing £200 as the reward of his triumph over the fallen.

* *See* page 257.

In 1730, he was dignified by the laurel. The appointment was owing, not to any poetical merit he may have manifested, but to the fact of his having proved himself a sound Whig, by writing "The Non-Juror." The ridicule poured upon him on this occasion was unsparing, and it was not diminished by the publication of his successive Birth-day Odes.

"Well, said Apollo, still 'tis mine
To give the real Laurel;
For that, my Pope, my son divine,
Of rivals ends the quarrel.

"But guessing who should have the luck
To be the Birth-day fibber,
I thought of Dennis, Tibbald, Duck,
But never dreamed of Cibber."

His enemies had been on the increase for some years past, and persecuted him with a pertinacity and bitterness of which we fortunately have no instance in the present day. Periodical publications attacked him with unremitting industry. Attempts were made at the outset to stifle plays which eventually, by their continued popularity, proved their adaptation to the public taste, and the merciless satire of Pope selected him as its choicest victim. It is difficult now to detect the causes of such rancorous hostility, as there appears little in his genius or character to warrant it. In a letter to Pope, he gives the following account of the origin of that poet's ill-feeling towards him, and, as the assertion was suffered to go forth without contradiction, we may assume that from so contemptible a cause arose that long enduring contention.

"The play of 'The Rehearsal,'" says Cibber, "which had lain some few years dormant, being by his present Majesty (then Prince of Wales) commanded to be revived, the part of Bays fell to my share. To this character there had always been allowed such ludicrous liberties of observation upon anything new or remarkable in the state

of the stage as Mr. Bays might think proper to take. Much about this time, then, the 'Three Hours After Marriage' had been acted without success, when Mr. Bays, as usual, had a fling at it; which in itself was no jest, unless the audience would please to make it one. But however, flat as it was, Mr. Pope was mortally sore upon it. This was the offence: In this play, two coxcombs being in love with a learned virtuoso's wife, to get unsuspected access to her, ingeniously send themselves as two presented rarities to the husband, the one curiously swathed up like an Egyptian mummy, and the other slily covered in the pasteboard skin of a crocodile; upon which poetical expedient, I, Mr. Bays, when the two kings of Brentford came from the clouds into the throne again, instead of what my part directed me to say, made use of the words: 'Now, Sir, this revolution I had some thought of introducing by a quite different contrivance; but my design taking air, some of your sharp wits, I found, had made use of it before me; otherwise I intended to have stolen one of them in the shape of a Mummy, and the other in that of a Crocodile!' Upon which, I doubt, the audience, by the roar of their applause, shewed their proportionable contempt of the play they belonged to. But why am I answerable for that? I did not lead them by any reflection of my own into that contempt. Surely, to have used the bare words Mummy and Crocodile was neither unjust nor unmannerly. Where, then, was the crime of simply saying there had been two such things in a former play? But this, it seems, was so heinously taken by Mr. Pope, that in the swelling of his heart, after the play was over, he came behind the scenes, with his lips pale and his voice trembling, to call me to account for the insult; and accordingly fell upon me with all the foul language that a wit out of his senses could be capable of. How durst I have the impudence to treat

any gentleman in that manner, &c. Now let the reader judge by this concern who was the true mother of the child! When he was almost choked with the foam of his passion, I was enough recovered from my amazement to make him, as near as I can remember, this reply: 'Mr. Pope, you are so particular (distinguished) a man, that I must be ashamed to return your language as I ought to do; but since you have attacked me in so monstrous a manner, this you may depend upon, that as long as the play continues to be acted, I will never fail to repeat the same words over and over again.' Now, as he accordingly found I kept my word for several days following, I am afraid that he has since thought that his pen was a sharper weapon than his tongue to trust his revenge with; and however just cause this may be for his so doing, it is, at least, the only cause my conscience can charge me with."

The play thus glanced at with such fatal effect, was a miserable performance, the joint production, as it was surmised, of Gay, Arbuthnot and Pope, which deservedly failed on the first night of representation. Pope, however, had previously sneered at Cibber in his epistle to Arbuthnot, and in the First Part of "The Dunciad." In 1740, when Cibber published his apology, he made the following characteristic allusion to the attacks of the satirist: "When," says he, "I find my name in the satirical works of this poet, I never look upon it as any malice meant to me, but profit to himself. For he considers that my face is more known than most in the nation, and therefore a lick at the Laureate will be a sure bait, *ad captandum vulgus*, to catch little readers." The passage nettled Pope, and he attacked Cibber again in the Fourth Book of "The Dunciad," representing him as the darling of the Goddess of Dulness.

"Soft in her lap her Laureate son reclines."

Cibber's equanimity was disturbed, and he published the letter from which we have made the above extract, entitled, "A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope, inquiring into the motives that might induce him, in his satirical works, to be so frequently fond of Mr. Cibber's name." This was replied to in an anonymous pamphlet, with the remarkable title of "A Blast upon Bays, or a New Lick at the Laureate; containing remarks upon a late tattling performance;" but Cibber was not entirely without champions, as one man warmly took up his cause in a letter with the motto:

"Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito."

Throughout the whole quarrel, Cibber had by far the best of it, both in temper, discretion, and the justice of his cause. His warm recognition of his antagonist's great abilities, contrasts with the asperity and the want of candour in Pope, in refusing to recognize any talent in one of the most successful dramatists of the day.

"That Cibber," says the former, "ever murmured at your fame, or that he was not always, to the best of his judgment, as warm an admirer of your writing as any of your nearest friends could be, is what you cannot by any one fact or instance disprove. How comes it then, that in your works you have so often treated him as a dunce or an enemy? Did he at all intrench on your sovereignty in verse, because he had now and then written a comedy that succeeded?"

The blows that the combatants dealt upon each other, fell with more telling effect on Pope's sensitive organization than on the thicker self-sufficiency of his antagonist. Pope, though he attempted to disguise his agony, was tortured by the wanton levity and shamelessness of his opponent. Dr. Johnson says: "I have heard Mr. Richardson relate that he attended his father on a visit,

when one of Cibber's pamphlets came into the hands of Pope, who said: 'These things are my diversion.' They sat by him while he perused it, and saw his features writhen with anguish, and young Richardson said to his father, when they returned, that he hoped to be preserved from such diversion as had been that day the lot of Pope." Whereas Cibber could enjoy his own castigation, and would read to his friends the lines pointed at himself, interspersing them with humorous observations, which were as amusing to his auditory as they would have been galling to their object.

Pope now meditated a new edition of "The Dunciad," and was spurred on to the undertaking by another pamphlet, entitled "The Egotist, or Colley on Cibber," which Mr. Disraeli regards as Cibber's "Supplement to his Apology." In the latter end of 1743 "The Dunciad" appeared, in its altered and final state. Theobald had been dethroned from his painful pre-eminence, and Cibber raised to his place. Pope, in this instance, allowed his irascibility to cloud his judgment, and thus marred the whole design of the poem. Theobald, as its hero, was perhaps in his place, but to make Cibber the hero of dulness, was preposterous. He was without doubt open to attack in innumerable points, but he possessed one quality in which his superiority could enable him to laugh at all detraction, and that was the very reverse of dulness. The poem was accompanied by a long Discourse of Richard Aristarchus, intended as a reply to Cibber's attacks, written by Warburton, in which he aimed his blow at two antagonists at once, ridiculing Bentley in his manner, and Cibber in his matter. This called forth another letter from Cibber, which was the final effort in the strife.

Though the wonderful superiority of talent in Pope made the contest so unequal from the first, yet Cibber kept the laugh on his side throughout; and it may be

doubted whether the satire of Pope has not, in the estimation of posterity, injured his own character and reputation more than Cibber's. Still, with all his levity and vivacity, our hero could not be quite obtuse to the keen point of such a missile. "After all," says Mr. Disraeli, "one may perceive that, though the good-humour of Cibber was real, still the immortal satire of Pope had injured his higher feelings. He betrays his secret grief at its close, while he seems to be sporting with his pen; and though he appears to confide in the falsity of the satire, as his best chance for saving him from it, still he feels that the caustic ink of such a satirist must blister and spot wherever it falls."

He quitted the stage the same year in which he was appointed Poet-Laureate. The following ten years he employed in drawing up his memoirs, which he published under the title of "An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber," a life which Fielding said he lived only to apologize for. This work has been the most popular of all his productions, and has obtained the praise of men of such diverse tempers as Horace Walpole and Dr. Johnson; the former terming it "Cibber's inimitable treatise on the stage," while Johnson pronounces it to be "very entertaining."

It is a rambling book of gossip, written in a slovenly style, but filled with interesting notices of the most eminent actors and actresses of his time. They, too, were performers of no ordinary merit; and such a work, on its first appearance, must have exceeded in interest any novel or romance. His character, as there unconsciously depicted by himself, presents little to excite our sympathy, still less our esteem. His inordinate vanity represses any impulse of admiration his talents might excite; and that utter abnegation of all self-respect,

strange in one who had risen by his own unaided effort, affords room only for contempt or pity. Writing of the Earl of Chesterfield, he says: "Having often had the honour to be the butt of his raillery, I must own I have received more pleasure from his lively manner of raising the laugh against me, than I could have felt from the smoothest flattery of a serious civility." English literature presents few instances of such abject toadyism. Still he had talents, and let them receive their tribute of admiration; he did a service to his generation, and let him have his meed of praise. He was a patient reformer of inveterate abuses. By his writings he elevated the morality of the stage, and by his policy he improved its management.

His private life stands in unfavourable contrast with his public career. Witty and unprincipled, clever and vain, he lived only to amuse and be amused; a genuine comic actor, with no depth of feeling or strength of character; undepressed by misfortune, but elated with success; fond of his bottle, fond of his jest, fond likewise of the rattle of the dice.

Though undeserving the excessive depreciation he has suffered, a candid impartiality will refuse to connect any flattering encomium with his name. Whatever the debt contemporaries may owe, they who make it their chief business to cater to the public amusement merely, have little claim upon a succeeding generation; and his works having answered their purpose, will be solely valuable to the literary or historical student, as indicative of the taste of a period he neither disgraced nor adorned.

In height he was of the middle size, with a fair complexion, and a carriage easy, though not graceful. His voice was shrill, painfully so when he raised it to an unusual pitch; but his attitudes were strikingly expres-

sive. On the stage he seemed to put on the character he was acting, and every limb and gesture spoke the part as truthfully as the words he uttered. Instances of carelessness, however, were not unfrequent. Once, when acting as Sir Courtly Rice, a part he had played a hundred times, he quite lost himself; so, making a ceremonious bow to the lady with whom he was acting, he drawled out, "your humble servant, Madam," then with quiet assurance walked across the stage, and said to the prompter, "Well, what next?"

From the time of his retirement from the management of Drury Lane till his death, he took no prominent part in theatrical matters; but occasionally appeared on the stage, and would receive as much as £50 a night for his services. There was a rising actress, in whose career he took a warm and lively interest, and that was Mrs. Woffington: the witty, the volatile, the beautiful Peg Woffington, President of the Beefsteak Club; who, at the jocund noon of night, after having melted an audience into tears by her touching impersonation of innocence and sorrow, might be seen at the head of the board, brandishing the foaming pewter, giving as the toast, "Here's to liberty, confusion to all order." He delighted to play Fondlewife to her Lætitia in Congreve's "Old Bachelor;" and Swiney, likewise, in his old age, after his twenty years residence abroad, became one of her danglers, and left her a handsome legacy at his death.

In 1745, Cibber appeared as Pandulph, in his tragedy "Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John," and his last publication was an essay on the character of Cicero, then a popular topic, owing to Dr. Middleton's celebrated life of that orator. He died December 12th, 1757, in the eighty-seventh year of his age. He had conversed with his servant at six o'clock in the morning, and appeared in

his usual health, at nine he was found quite dead. Of his many children, two only acquired any notoriety, his son Theophilus, who was a great profligate, but a tolerable actor, and, like his father, excelled in the characters of fops and old men, and his youngest child Charlotte.

A witticism of the son has been preserved. The father once meeting him dressed in the extreme of foppery, surveyed him curiously for some minutes, and then said, with great disdain: "Indeed, The, I pity you." "Don't pity me, Sir," replied the son, "pity my tailor."

The career of his daughter Charlotte was so eccentric, replete with such singular vicissitudes, that we cannot resist devoting a paragraph to her memory. She seemed to labour under a deficiency in some one faculty, which more than neutralized the unusual activity of all the rest. Ardent, intelligent, and persevering, her conduct ever bordered on the extravagant; a Lola Montes in her day, though with greater virtue, and, therefore, not so fortunate as to win the favour of kings and guardsmen. The principal materials of this sketch are to be found in a narrative written by herself, and dedicated to herself, to which she affixed the following appropriate motto:

> "This tragic story, or this comic jest,
> May make you laugh or cry, as you like best."

In very early life she gave indications of an excitable temperament, and an unruly will. Among her juvenile pranks, she relates how one morning, when but four years old, she got up early, put on her father's wig, dressed herself as well as she could in male attire, and mimicing the paternal strut, went out to receive the obeisances of the passers-by: how, on another occasion, her father was awoke by deafening acclamations, and on looking out of the window, beheld his hopeful daughter making a tri-

umphal entry into the village, sitting astride upon an ass, and attended by a retinue of screaming urchins, whom she had bribed to take part in the procession. At eight years of age she was sent to school, and devoted herself to her studies with passionate vehemence. The needle, woman's ordinary weapon against inactivity, she could never learn to manage; but every masculine pursuit or amusement had for her an irresistible attraction. She would hunt, shoot, ride races, dig, drink beer, do anything, in short, that a young lady ought not to do. At fourteen, she went to live with her mother at a house near Uxbridge. There she became a capital shot, would rise early, spend the whole day at her sport, and return home, laden with spoil. Her gun, at the suggestion of a good-natured friend, was soon taken away from her, and she revenged herself by attempting to demolish the chimneys of the house, by firing at them with a huge fowling-piece that had hung over the kitchen mantel-piece.

To the gun succeeded the curry-comb, and she became an adept in all the mysteries of the stable. She next applied herself to the study of physic, obtained some drugs, and with formal gravity practised among those poor people who were credulous enough to swallow her concoctions. Her next employment was gardening, which she pursued with her usual enthusiasm, and after two or three hours hard work would not allow herself rest even for her meals, but with some bread and bacon in one hand, and a pruning knife in the other, continue unremittingly her self-imposed labour. At this time her father was abroad, and the man who acted in the double capacity of groom and gardener, was for some irregularity dismissed. Charlotte was in ecstasies, as she was now arch-empress of his two-fold domain, and unceasing were her manœuvres to prevent the engagement of a successor. The dismissed servant having been seen straying near the house one evening, suspicions

were aroused, which Charlotte skilfully inflamed by her dark suggestions, and then boldly undertook the defence of the leaguered house. The plate was carried up into her room, which she garnished with all the weapons of war the establishment could afford, and then sent the household to bed. After a long vigil, to her great mortification, no attack was made, universal silence prevailed, when luckily a cur began to bark. Up went the window, and volley after volley was poured into the unoffending void, while her mother and the domestics lay below in trembling consternation. While still a girl, she married Mr. Charke, an eminent composer on the violin, but he was a worthless libertine, and after the birth of a daughter, they separated. She then obtained an engagement on the stage, and relates with childish simplicity, how for a whole week she did nothing but walk from one end of the town to the other, to read her name on the bills. Her success was such as to justify expectations of her becoming a most accomplished actress, and as Lucy in "George Barnwell," she attracted considerable attention; but she soon quarrelled with the manager, and afterwards satirized him in a farce she wrote, termed "The Art of Management." She then tried a new sphere, and opened a shop in Long Acre, as oil-woman and grocer, and her whole soul was absorbed in the fluctuations of sugar. The shop did not pay, and she quitted it to become the proprietress of a puppet-show, by which she lost all she had, and was arrested for a debt of seven pounds. Her release was effected by the contributions of some acquaintances, when she dressed herself in male attire, and assumed the name of Mr. Brown. Under this disguise, she engaged the affections of a young heiress, to whom, in order to escape a private marriage urged by the amatory damsel, she was compelled to disclose her secret. Shortly afterwards, she exhibited her valorous spirit by knocking a man down with a cudgel for having

fabricated some story at her expense. She next obtained a situation as valet-de-chambre to a nobleman, where she appears for a short time to have known something like comfort; but on being dismissed from this place, she became extremely reduced, her child fell ill, and ruin stared her in the face. A timely supply from a friend relieved her from her more immediate necessities, and with some small remainder she set up as an itinerant sausage-seller. This, like her other avocations, did not prove remunerative; and we next hear of her as a singer at some musical entertainment, then as a performer at Bartholomew fair, then as assistant to a master of legerdemain. She next, by means of some advances made by an uncle, opened a public-house in Drury Lane, the first she saw vacant, which of course failed; and her next employment was as a waiter in a tavern at Marylebone. Here she made herself so useful that a kinswoman of the landlady intimated that her hand would not be refused if applied for, and the captivating waiter to escape a second involuntary marriage, was obliged again to reveal the secret of her sex. She next engaged herself to manage Punch at a puppet-show, and afterwards joined a band of strolling players. Tired of wandering, it would seem, she settled at Chepstow, and opened a pastry-cook's shop. When she had built her oven, she had not wherewithal to heat it, and when she had obtained the fuel, she was without the necessary materials for her trade; but every obstacle gave way before her ingenuity and perseverance. After a short trial, she removed her business to Pell, a place near Bristol, received a small legacy, with which she paid off her debts, and commenced life afresh. She wrote a short tale for a newspaper, and obtained thereby a situation as corrector of the press; but her earnings at this toilsome occupation being insufficient to support her, she obtained employment as prompter at the theatre at Bath. She afterwards returned to London, and kept a

public-house at Islington, but as we here lose the aid of her narrative, her movements at this epoch are uncertain. She finally had recourse to her pen for subsistence, and began the publication of her memoirs. Her next production was a novel, and a graphic picture has been given of her home at this period. When the publisher with a friend called for the purpose of purchasing her manuscript, she was living in a wretched hut near the Clerkenwell prison. The furniture consisted of a dresser extremely clean, ornamented with a few plates; and a fractured pitcher stood underneath it. A gaunt domestic guarded the establishment, while on a broken chair by the grate sat the mistress in her strange attire. A monkey was perched on one hob, a cat on the other, at her feet lay a half-starved cur, and a magpie chattered from her chair. The remains of a pair of bellows laid upon her knees served as a desk, her ink-stand was a broken teacup, and her solitary pen was worn to the stump. On her visitors seating themselves on a rough deal board, for there was not a second chair in the room, she began with her beautiful, clear voice to read from the manuscript before her, and asked thirty guineas for the copyright. The grim handmaiden stared aghast at the enormity of the demand. The iron-hearted publisher proposed five pounds, but finally doubled the sum, and offered in addition fifty copies of the work. The bargain was struck, and the authoress was left in temporary affluence. From this time Mrs. Charlotte Charke disappears from our view, and she died shortly afterwards on the 6th of April, 1760.

So strange a story could hardly be paralelled from the wildest pages of romance. Through an infinite variety of endeavours, success never once shone upon her path, and old age found her in a state of the most abject penury. After so fitful a fever, how welcome must have been the advent of repose.

## WILLIAM WHITEHEAD.

To those who are giving to contemporaries some mention of an age that is past, and of names well-nigh forgotten, it is a hard task to judge how much it may be worth a struggle to save from the wreck of oblivion. If heroes have perished, because no song of poet hymned their daring deeds, has not the fame of poets themselves been oftentimes perilled by their biographers? William Mason, the author of "Caractacus," wrote a memoir of his friend Whitehead, which has been condemned by Boswell as a mere dry narrative of facts. The world has been content to forget the book and its subject; and but for the brief biographical notice of Mr. Campbell, how few would know anything of Colley Cibber's immediate successor. And yet the author of "The Roman Father," and of "Creusa" has much in his writings more worthy of perusal, much in his literary history more deserving of record, than many of the poetasters whose names the genius of Johnson has saved from that silent sentence of forgetfulness which time so sternly passes upon mediocrity.

It is as difficult not to regret, as it is easy to account

for, this general ignorance of all save our greatest writers. The history of our literature is biographical. Its annals teach by examples. And so we speak of the age of Dryden, and of Pope, and of Johnson, as if the literature of each of the eras was represented by these men alone, and there was no work for others to do in it. The long line of light is shed through the dark centuries by the great stars. Where they shine at distant intervals the heaven is blacker, but need we close our eyes to the twinklings of those lesser fires, without whose ray the interspace were darkness?

W. Whitehead was born in the parish of St. Botolph's, in the town of Cambridge. He was the son of a baker, whose notoriety for worldly waste and mismanagement has been perpetuated by the nickname of "Whitehead's Folly" being given to a few acres of land, on which he expended large sums of money "in ornamenting rather than cultivating." Mr. Mason has penned an elaborate apology for the poet's humble parentage, and Mr. Campbell has ridiculed Mr. Mason for a defence so needless. William was the second son; his elder brother John was educated for the Church, and, by the interest of Lord Montfort, obtained the living of Penshore in the diocese of Worcester. The baker's taste for model farming so involved him, that he died considerably in debt; and the subject of this memoir, from the profits of his theatrical writings, most honourably discharged the claims of his creditors. Mr. Mason speaks of this conduct of his friend with exultation, and for once indulges a facetious vein in terming it "a rare instance of poetical justice."

Whitehead was at first sent to a school in Cambridge, and thence removed to Winchester. Mr. Mason quotes an account given of him by Dr. Balguy, who, as Canon of Winchester Cathedral, had enjoyed opportunities of procuring some information in reference to Whitehead's

school career. He very early showed his taste for poetry, and is said to have written a comedy at sixteen. Through life he was a good reader and reciter of poetry, and early evinced some histrionic talent; for in the winter of 1732, he took a female part in the "Andrea" of Terence, and also gained much applause by his impersonation of Marcia in "Cato."

Some proof of his early poetical powers is given by an anecdote told of a visit of Pope to the school in 1733. The veteran satirist was staying at the Earl of Peterborough's, near Southampton, and was taken by his Lordship to Winchester to see the College. The Earl gave on the occasion ten guineas, to be disposed of in prizes to the boys, and Pope set as a subject for English verse "Peterborough." Whitehead was one of six who gained prizes.

His successful essays in verse were confined to his mother-tongue; for in Latin epigrams and verses he was deficient. We are told, however, that he was employed to translate into Latin the first epistle of the "Essay on Man." Next to his poetical and histrionic tastes, his school-days have been chiefly mentioned as the time when he formed some of those friendships with the great which were ultimately of much advantage to him. At Winchester he was the associate of Lord Drumlanrig, Sir Charles Douglas, Sir Robert Burdett, Sir Bryan Broughton, and other boys of patrician birth. For this, and his long residence in the house of Lord and Lady Jersey, he has not escaped the charge of toadyism. Mr. Macaulay has called him "the most successful tuft-hunter of his day." One of his biographers suggests that his delicacy of mind and body may have led him to such companions, in preference to boys of coarser habits. The apology is more amiable than sagacious. Though he may possibly have preferred such

society, on grounds less culpable and more disinterested, there was doubtless a mixture of prudence and vanity in his selection of his friends. A boy of his parentage was flattered by the friendship of the great. And he lived in days when, unless a poor man had transcendent parts, he could not prosper without patronage.

"Principibus placiusse viris haud ultima laus est,"

was a line in those days much quoted, and very freely translated; and though Whitehead lived in what has been called called the transition age, from the protection of patrons to that of the public, many men will be found in that era, and later too, who, in dedications and elsewhere, have laid themselves open to the charge of toadyism, as much as ever he did. We should also remember, that a boy of such humble birth would scarcely have been received as an equal by the sons of gentlemen; and if he was to be a dependent at all, he doubtless preferred being so among the greatest.

In September, 1735, he stood among the candidates for New College, but was placed so low on the roll that he was not sent up. Being superannuated, he was compelled to leave Winchester. He returned to his mother at Cambridge, and now derived more advantage from his humble extraction, than from his own abilities, or his aristocratic school-friendships. Mr. Thomas Pyke, a baker at Cambridge, had founded some scholarships at Clare Hall. Whitehead's claim, as the orphan son of a man of the founder's vocation, was admitted, and he entered as a sizar. His career as an author commenced at the University; for as a student little is known of him, except that he was industrious and economical, and enjoyed the friendship of Hurd, Stebbing, Ogden, and other distinguished contemporaries. He wrote some verses in 1736, as did many other young men at both

Universities, on the marriage of the Prince of Wales. But his first poem, which attracted any attention, was his epistle, "On the Danger of Writing Verse," which may indeed be said to point its own moral, and belongs to that class of composition of which Dr. Johnson has observed, that he would rather praise than read.

We hear, however, that it was generally admired, and that Pope himself spoke of it with commendation. Smooth verse of average merit, from a very young man at College, striving by his pen to supply his necessities, was not likely to provoke hostile criticism, especially when there was nothing in it bold, new, or heterodox, to jar against prevailing tastes and prejudices; and imitation is flattery so delicate and sincere, that Pope would doubtless encourage even a faint echo of his own matchless lines from an admirer and disciple.

In 1739 he took his Bachelor's degree. In 1742 he was elected a Fellow of his College, and the following year was made Master of Arts. It was now his intention to take orders. That he was about to embrace this profession with no higher motive than a wish to gain a competence, which might enable him to pursue his literary avocations, we have some reason to believe. He was actuated by no very high or holy impulse, for he speaks, in a fragment of verse to a friend, with great levity of his professional prospects:

> "Whether in wide-spread scarf and rustling gown,
> My borrow'd Rhetoric soothes the saints in Town,
> Or makes in country pews soft matrons weep,
> Gay damsels smile and tir'd Churchwardens sleep."

Before, however, he took this step, he was offered by Lord Jersey the place of domestic tutor to his son, Lord Villiers. He not only relinquished, at Lord Jersey's request, all idea of entering on the clerical profession, but he ultimately gave up his Fellowship, in order to keep his

position in that family. After the publication of his poem, "On the Danger of Writing Verse," he was not idle with his pen, but gave to the world, in 1743, "Atys and Adrastus," "A Letter of Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII.," and "An Essay on Ridicule." There is a manifest improvement in all these on his first production. After all, however, he but feebly imitates Pope. Some who lack originality, seem to atone for it by the force of their language. By this they cheat the indiscriminating, and therefore the majority of readers, into admiration. But this showy talent, much at a premium in these days, Whitehead, in his poems, does not display. His thoughts are not original, and they are expressed in obscure, meagre, and sometimes ungrammatical language.

He now entered the family of Lord Jersey, and at this time he appears to have been a frequent *habitué* of theatres, and to have turned his thoughts to dramatic composition. His first production was a ballad farce, called "The Edinburgh Ball," in which the young Pretender is ridiculed. Had it ever seen the light, posterity might have been tempted to connect with this triumph over the fallen, his appointment to the laurel, but it was neither printed nor performed. He next employed himself on a tragedy, and produced "The Roman Father," in imitation of Corneille's "Les Horaces." Mr. Campbell observes "that Mason has employed a good deal of criticism to show that the piece would have been better if the artist had bestowed more pains upon it." It turns on the well-known story, told with such graphic power in the first book of Livy. Those who remember that beautiful narrative, will feel convinced that no drama could place it in a clearer or more picturesque light before them. In the tale itself there is not material for a five act play; and where Whitehead has added or altered, he has not improved.

The scene is laid at Rome. There are six *dramatis personæ;* only two women, Horatia and a confidential friend, Valencia. The armies are encamped opposite to each other. Horatia is full of apprehension for her lover, Curiatius, one of three twin Alban brethren, and distracted between her duty to her betrothed and her brother Horatius. Meanwhile, the encamped hosts lay aside their arms and conclude a truce, but as glory must have its victims, the contest is to lie between three of either army. The Horatii and Curiatii are represented as personal friends, and, during the truce, joking amicably in each other's tents. The lots are cast. The three twin brothers are to be arrayed against each other. News first reaches Horatia and her father that the Horatii are chosen as the champions of their country. He rejoices; she is full of fears for her brother. Next arrives the intelligence that the Curiatii are to do battle on the Alban side. The agony of Horatia may be well imagined and might have been finely described. The father arms his son Horatius, and sends him forth with prayers for victory. His sister supplicates him to decline the conflict. Its results are well known. After her lover's death, Horatia provokes her brother by her taunts until he draws his sword and wounds her; and these taunts are so violent that his conduct appears almost excusable. This is neither true to the story nor natural. There is something super-romantic in her wishing to die by the hand that had slain her lover, when that hand is her brother's. She, however, does not die by the wound inflicted; but, as Mr. Campbell tells us, directions are given in one edition, for stripping the bandages from off her wounds, and she perishes from loss of blood. This is assuredly a stage horror which Horace would have prescribed, as certainly as he did the banquets of Thyestes, or the butcheries of Medea.

There are very few lines in the play worthy of extract.

It is tolerably well adapted for acting, but we may owe this to Garrick almost as much to the author, for when he accepted the play, he exercised his discretion very freely, and was unsparing in his use of the knife. On the stage it was fairly successful.

The following year, 1750, he published his "Hymn to the Bristol Spring," an imitation of some of the hymns of Homer and Callimachus. It is written in blank verse, and is better than the heroics he had given to the world while at Cambridge.

At the same time appeared "The Sweepers." This is a dismal attempt at a humorous poem in blank verse, into which is introduced a pathetic tale of seduction. A very beautiful maiden, who delights in the name of Lardella (one much better used in "The Rehearsal"), is a sweeper in Seven Dials. She aspires to a crossing in Whitehall, and having attained the object of her ambition, she there attracts the gaze of a licentious lordling, by whom she is ruined, deserted; and we are told that

> "In bitterness of soul she cursed in vain:
> Her proud betrayer, curs'd her fatal charms,
> And perish'd in the streets from which she sprang."

There are, doubtless, seducers among the aristocracy; but Lardella's sad history, if not ludicrously improbable, is, at any rate, ludicrously told.

In addition to his dramatic and poetic compositions, he appears, at this time, to have written three papers for "The World." This periodical numbered among its contributors, Lord Chesterfield, Lord Bath, Sir Charles Hanbury, Horace Walpole, Soame Jennings, Mr. Cambridge, Mr. Coventry; its editor was Mr. Thomas Moore. The first of Whitehead's is humorous, and in ridicule of the prevalent taste of that day for Chinese articles of every kind. The second is on "Contemporary Romances," which he lashes severely for their shallow pretensions, their

inaccuracy, and indecency. The third laments the effeminacy of the age.

Encouraged by the success of his former drama, he employed himself on one which very much exceeds it in merit. As in a former case, he had grounded his play on one written by another. So now, too timid to construct a new plot, he therefore took his subject from the "Ion" of Euripides; "and," as Mr. Campbell says, "with bold and sometimes interesting alterations." Whitehead himself says of it: "The subject of the following scenes is so ancient, so slightingly mentioned by the historians, and so fabulously treated by Euripides in his tragedy of 'Ion,' that the author thought himself at liberty to make the story his own. Some glaring circumstances he was obliged to adhere to, which he has endeavoured to render probable."

The "Ion," though it has incurred the critical censure of Schlegel for some improbabilities and repetitions, is one of the most beautiful of the dramas of Euripides. A short account of that play in connection with the "Creusa" of Whitehead, may not prove unacceptable to the reader—the coincidence of the name, and our admiration of it as perhaps the most beautiful classical drama in the language, will compel us also to pay a passing tribute to the "Ion" of Sir Thomas Talfourd. The story, as told by Euripides, runs thus:—Creusa, daughter of Erectheus, King of Athens, falls a victim to the licentious passion of Apollo, and bears a child, whose birth she conceals, and whom she exposes. He is, however, found, and brought up as servant to the god at the temple. After this, Creusa is married to Xuthus, a military stranger. They are childless, and go to the Oracle at Delphi to make inquiries (v. 66.):

ἥκουσι πρὸς μαντεῖ' Ἀπόλλωνος τάδε,
ἔρωτι παίδων· Λοξίας δὲ τὴν τύχην

ἐς τοῦτ' ἐλαύνει, κοὐ λέληθεν, ὡς δοκεῖ.
δώσει γὰρ εἰσελθόντι μαντεῖον τόδε
Ξούθῳ τὸν αὐτοῦ παῖδα, καὶ πεφυκέναι
κείνου σφε φήσει, μητρὸς ὡς ἐλθὼν δόμους
γνωσθῇ Κρεούσῃ, καὶ γάμοι τε Λοξίου
κρυπτοὶ γένωνται, παῖς τ ἔχῃ τὰ πρόσφορα.

"And here to Loxias' Oracle are come
Yearning for children. Nor doth God forget,
But helpeth on the matter to this end.
For when old Xuthus to the sacred shrine
Cometh, t'will give up to him his own son—
His origin revealing, so the youth
May hie him to his mother's home, and there
Be recognised by her—Apollo's loves
Be kept in sacred secresy—and Ion
Gain all things fitting his estate and birth."

When Creusa appears at the Oracle, Ion meets her, and asks her for what purpose she comes? She is reminded of the scene of her early amour with the god, and exclaims (v. 251.):

ὦ τλήμονες γυναῖκες, ὦ τολμήματα
Θεῶν· Τί δῆτα; ποῖ δίκην ἀνοίσομεν,
εἴ τῶν κρατούντων ἀδικίαις ὀλούμεθα;

"Woe! our ill-fated sex! O bold essays
Of Gods! What then! What hope of justice here,
When they, our masters, wrong us and we perish!"

She tells him the mission on which she and her husband have come.

He asks:

οὐδ' ἔτεκες οὐδὲν πώποτ', ἀλλ' ἄτεκνος εἶ;

"Didst ne'er bear offspring, but art childless, say?"

She adroitly avoids the question:

Ὁ Φοῖβος οἶδε τὴν ἐμὴν ἀπαιδίαν.

"Apollo understands my childlessness."

The dialogue between them is pathetic and beautiful. He commiserates her condition, and she grieves over his parentless state, and total ignorance of his birth and origin. She relates to him the story of her amour with

Apollo as if of a third person. Xuthus, meanwhile, consults the Oracle, and comes out and proclaims Ion as his son. He has been told so by the god; and the age of the youth so exactly agrees with a former gallantry of his, that he is convinced of it, and succeeds in persuading Ion. They rejoicingly embrace. Ion's feelings, at this crisis, are exquisitely described; and in some lines of genuine pathos and beauty, he compares his present happy and humble lot—

> Θεῶν ἐν εὐχαῖς ἢ λογοισιν ἢ βροτῶν
> ὑπηρετῶν χαίρουσιν, οὐ γοωμένοις.
>
> "In prayers to Gods, or conversing with men,
> Ministering to those who joy, not those who weep,"

with the dangers and pains of an elevated rank among those who are strangers to him, and to whom he is unknown. The son of a foreigner—the child of love, not of marriage—he dreads the aristocratic prejudices of the autocthonous Athenians. The chorus now tells Creusa that Xuthus had found a child of his own blood. She is filled with grief and jealousy. The Pædagogus, evidently introduced into the play to do this particular work, suggests to her that she should destroy Ion, and undertakes the murderous deed himself. How it fared with the prisoners and their intended victim, the narration of a messenger informs us. A banquet is given in the sacred precincts of the Temple. All around is grand and gorgeous. There are strewed about tapestries, on which are embroidered imitations of the spoils which Hercules* bore off in triumph from the vanquished Amazons. Pictured, too, on them are these scenes:

> "Uranus,
> In Heaven's wide concave, marshalling the stars,
> And Helios driving down to the last ray

* An anachronism, as it happens, for Ion was more ancient than the son of Jove and Alcmena.

His steeds on, leading Hesperus in his rear,
And night, with robes of raven darkness, urged
The unyoked coursers of her radiant car,
While the stars glittering follow in her train,
The Pleiad gliding through the vault of Heaven.
Girt with his sword, Orion too was there,
The Bear within her golden orbit turned,
And the Moon's Orb above shot arrowy light
Through half the month."

They sit at the banquet. The old man orders larger goblets to be brought. He hands to his young lord the most capacious and richest cup, dropping into it the powerful drug Creusa had prepared. As a libation was being poured, some one uttered words of evil omen. Ion commands them all to empty their goblets on the earth. At that moment, a flock of doves came trooping in, and with their beaks sipped the spilled wine. The bird which tasted that which Ion had poured out is seized with convulsive shudderings, and dies.

So is the base design frustrated. He instantly accuses the Pædagogus, who admits that he is the instrument of the Queen's malice. Ion determines to take the life of Creusa. The Pythian priestess appears to him, and bids him go to Athens, bearing with him the ark or cradle in which she had received him as a foundling. When they meet — the son unconsciously seeking the life of his mother, who, in ignorance, had attempted his—she recognises the cradle, and he listens for some time incredulous to her declaration that she is his mother. She who was to have fallen by his hand is now embraced with tenderness, and she triumphantly exclaims:

ἄπαιδες οὔκετ' ἐσμὲν, οὐδ' ἄτεκνοι·
δῶμ' ἑστιοῦται, γᾶ δ' ἔχει τυράννους·
ἀνηβᾷ δ' Ἐρεχθεὺς,
ὁ τε γηγενέτας δόμος οὐκέτι νύκτας
δέρκεται, ἀελίου δ' ἀναβλέπει λαμπάσιν.

"Childless no more, no more; our hearth again
Beams with domestic joy. Our land hath Kings;

Again Erectheus blooms.
Our ancient house no more looks forth in night,
But raiseth up its head in the sun's rays."

Minerva appears, and prophesies the future greatness of the descendants of Ion, and advises that Xuthus should not be undeceived about his supposed parentage to Ion. This fault of making gods and men conspire against Xuthus, the critics have justly condemned. It is the only blemish of a play in which many of the descriptions are exquisite, the situations dramatic, and the plot interesting.

Whitehead's "Creusa" lacks all the supernatural elements in the drama of Euripides, and is altogether tragic.

Ilyssus, the Ion of this play, is not a foundling, nor the child of heaven and earth. Nicander, the mortal lover of Creusa, had been privately married to her, and on the night that she bore him her first child, he was banished by her father, Erectheus, King of Athens. He took his new-born child with him, and to prevent pursuit, left some of his own clothes on the road, besmeared with blood. This produced a general belief that he and the child were dead. He retired to Delphi, entrusted the child to the priest and priestess of Apollo, and lived near, and acted the part of the supposed orphan's guardian, under the assumed name of Aletes. Ilyssus ministers in the temple. Meanwhile, at Athens, Creusa is married to a military stranger, Xuthus. Their marriage bed is unfruitful. Phorbas, an Athenian citizen, is sent to Delphi to inquire of the Oracle about this. Next comes Creusa herself. Her interview with her unknown son, Ilyssus, is manifestly imitated from Euripides, and very well described. She laments his friendless state. He tells her the priest and priestess have been parents to him, and, "more than all," that Aletes,

"The kindest, best good man; a neighbouring sage
Who has known better days, though now retir'd
To a small cottage on the mountain's brow,"

has been his guide, philosopher, and friend; that he has taught him

> "To adore high Heaven,
> And venerate on Earth, Heaven's image—truth!
> To feel for other's woes, and bear my own
> With manly resignation."

"The pure and holy character of the young Ilyssus," says Campbell, "is brought out, I have no hesitation to say, more interestingly than in Euripides by the display of his reverential gratitude to the Queen upon the first tenderness which she shows him, and by the agony of his ingenuous spirit on beholding it withdrawn."

Aletes influences the Oracle to declare that Ilyssus shall be the King of Athens. There is a rumour also that he is the son of Xuthus. At this, as in the "Ion," Creusa's love is turned into jealousy and hatred. Her confidante (the Pædagogus in "Ion,") suggests to her the murder of Ilyssus. She is at present irresolute, but at last consents, because taunted by her husband with the plebeian grave of her dead lover, Nicander. Meanwhile, Aletes meets Creusa, discloses himself to her, and tells her the history of Ilyssus soon enough to prevent the projected murder. Creusa rushes to the banquet just in time to save him; and after she has bound Xuthus and all present by an oath that Ilyssus shall be King of Athens, drinks off the fatal cup herself, and dies.

There is one scene of great beauty, in which Aletes counsels Ilyssus on his duties when placed on the throne of Athens.

ILYSSUS.

> Yet the tender friend
> Who should direct me leaves me to myself.
> Canst *thou* abandon me?

ALETES.

> Would fate permit,
> I would attend thee still. But, oh! Ilyssus,

Whate'er becomes of me, when thou shalt reach
That envied pinnacle of human greatness
Where faithful monitors but rarely follow,
Even then amidst the kindest smiles of fortune,
Forget not thou wert once distress'd and friendless.
Be strictly just, but yet, like Heaven, with mercy
Temper thy justice. From thy purged ear
Banish base flattery, and spurn the wretch
Who would persuade thee thou art more than man;
Weak, erring, selfish man, endued with power
To be the minister of public good.
If conquest charm thee, and the pride of war
Blaze on thy sight, remember thou art placed
The guardian of mankind, nor build thy fame
On rapines and on murders. Should soft peace
Invite to luxury, the pleasing bane
Of happy kingdoms, know from thy example,
The bliss and woe of nameless millions, springs
Their virtue or their vice. Nor think by laws
To curb licentious man; those laws alone
Can bend the headstrong many to their yoke,
Which make it present int'rest to obey them.

In discarding all supernatural aid, Whitehead has robbed the subject of much of its poetry. The power of fate and of the unseen world is removed, and Aletes influences the Pythian priestess to give a particular response. Now this treatment of the subject, though the play was meant for an English, and not a Greek audience, does not seem to be artistic. If the matter of the plot be drawn from Greek history or mythology, should it not be essentially Greek in plot, incident, thought, feeling, indeed, in everything but the language? Would an ancient dramatist have dared to represent the utterances from the tripod as influenced by such a man as Aletes?

These are the faults of a play which in the main is interesting and pleasing, and will well repay the labour of perusal. We named in connection with the "Creusa" of Whitehead, and the "Ion" of Euripides, the "Ion" of Sir Thomas Talfourd. It borrows only the name of the

Greek drama. The plot is similar merely in one respect, that it turns much on what has been a favourite subject with many imaginative writers—the history of a foundling. But in this beautiful drama, the supernatural element is judiciously introduced. We are not shocked by the improbabilities of Greek mythology, or the amours of gods with women. On the other hand, it is not a Greek subject with English incidents.

Throughout the whole of the "Ion," we feel that we are on classic ground. Adrastrus, Ctesiphon, and Phocion are Greeks. Without the clumsy tediousness of a prologue, or the truistic platitudes of a chorus, the play is classical throughout, and such as an Englishman of genius, taste, and erudition would write on a Greek subject, avoiding equally the pedantry of Ben Jonson's tragedies, and the anglicisms of Whitehead. There is, throughout the "Ion," the overwhelming idea of a ruthless destiny, strong and sure in its accomplishment.

The Oracle has declared:

> "Woe unto the babe!
> Against the life which now begins, shall life
> Lighted from thence be arm'd, and both soon quench'd,
> End this great line in sorrow;"

and we feel that we are closed in by the adamantine walls of an immutable necessity.

"Creusa" was acted 1754. Garrick took the part of Aletes, Mrs. Pritchard that of Creusa. It was highly successful.

Soon after the exhibition of his play, Whitehead accompanied his noble pupil and Lord Nuneham, son of the Earl of Harcourt, on their travels. They passed through Flanders, resided some time at Rheims, and went thence to Leipsic, where it was their intention to study the *Droit Publique*, under Mascow. Their plan was frustrated, for they found

the aged professor in his dotage, and quite incapable of lecturing. They therefore proceeded to Dresden, and visited some of the German Courts, spending the summer of 1755 at Hanover, when George II. paid his last visit to his Electorate. Here they met Mason, who had taken orders and was with Lord Holdernesse, the Secretary of State, as his domestic chaplain. They next visited Vienna, and passed on to Italy, crossed the Alps, and travelled in Switzerland, Germany and Holland, but did not visit France, on account of the declaration of war. During his absence, Whitehead corresponded with his friends and wrote some poems on subjects suggested by the scenes through which he passed. On his return, he published an ode to the Tiber, and several elegies on classical scenes and subjects. The ode has no line that is sublime in it. There are no thoughts that breathe—no words that burn. There is in it, and the other effusions, a level smoothness and affected classicality. Since "Childe Harold" has become a handbook for the continent, and Rogers and Sotheby have poetically journalized in Italy, we grow fastidious in judging verses on the "yellow Tiber," and the Coliseum. He published among them some lines to a sick friend, the perusal of which could by no means have accelerated his convalescence.

During his absence, Lady Jersey procured for him the office of Secretary and Registrar of the Order of the Bath. He must have merited, by his conscientious discharge of his duties as their son's tutor, and by his amiable and gentle manners, the affection of this noble family, to whose interest he also owes his appointment to the Laurel, and who insisted, after the education of Lord Villiers was completed, on his tutor being a constant inmate of their house. This plan Whitehead consented to for

some time, and resided with them for fourteen years; but at the death of Lord Jersey, much against his pupil's wish, he went into private lodgings, but continued to spend his summers between Middleton and Nuneham. Horace Walpole, in a letter dated at the latter place August 3rd, 1775, writes, in giving an account of a stay he had been making there: "There was Mr. Whitehead the Laureat, too, who, I doubt, will be a little puzzled if he has no better a victory than the last against Cæsar's next birthday. There was a little too much of the *Vertere funeribus triumphos* for a complimentary ode in the last action."

Cibber died in 1757. The Laureateship was offered to Gray, but Pope, Swift, and the other wits had succeeded in making the office so ridiculous by their attacks on Cibber, that Gray, though fearful of giving offence to those by whom it was offered to him, shrunk from it almost with disgust. Mason, it is said, was passed by because in orders, but Eusden before and Warton afterwards were both clergymen. Through the advocacy of the Jerseys, Whitehead next received an offer of the rejected Laurel. It had been offered to Gray as a sinecure. The annual odes were to be dispensed with. Not so with Whitehead; and this has excited the surprise of Mason, who says, "the late King would readily have dispensed with hearing music for which he had no ear, and Poetry for which he had no taste." On this, Campbell remarks: "His wonder is quite misplaced. If the King had a taste for Poetry, he would have abolished the Laureate Odes. As he had not, they were continued."

This is a rather obvious sarcasm, but the remark is true enough. Literature would have lost but little that is good had Whitehead's forty-eight odes never been added to the stock of unreadable verse. "I remember, there-

fore," writes Mason, "that when my friend had accepted the laurel, without such permission, the best blossom that could have been annexed to its foliage, that I advised him to employ a deputy to write his annual odes, and reserve his own pen for certain great occasions that might occur, such as a peace or a marriage, and then to address his Royal Master with some studied ode or epistle, as Boileau and Racine had done in France for their pensions. And I also pointed out to him two or three needy poets of the day, who, for the reward of five or ten guineas, would write immediately under the eye of the musical composer (a humiliation which all that write for music in the present state of that art ought to submit to,) and who would cut their lines shorter or spin them out longer, in order to fit them to any given air; as the poetical subalterns whom Handel employed did with great obsequiousness, whenever the oratorio exigencies of their musical general required them to new-array the rank and file of their metres. This advice, given partly in jest, partly in earnest, was not attended to by my friend. [He set himself to his periodical task, with the zeal of a person who wished to retrieve the honours of that laurel which came to him from the hand of Cibber in a very shrivelled or rather blasted state.] But though his first ode was calculated, from the heroic genealogy which it contained, to be peculiarly acceptable to the monarch for whose birthday it was written, and though its poetical merit had the very just approbation of Mr. Gray and other good judges, it was little relished in general."

The Odes have provoked a censure from Dr. Johnson, who, speaking of Cibber's and those of his successor, observed "Cibber's familiar style was better than Whitehead's assumed one; grand nonsense is insupportable." Gibbon has, for an historical inaccuracy, severely criticised the first of them which he speaks of "as one of the annual

odes which still adorn or disgrace the birthdays of our British Kings." In this composition, the poet attempts to trace the lineage of the House of Brunswick, and in doing so, Othbert is said to have dwelt in the Italian plain, and in his migration to have crossed the Julian Hills; the real state of the case being that he lived among the mountains of Tuscany, and afterwards passed over the Rhætian Alps. Historical inaccuracies in a laureate ode are no very grievous transgressions; but this and other mistakes which he enumerates, call forth from the severe and accurate historian this characteristic censure. "The poet may deviate from the truth of history, but every deviation ought to be compensated by the superior beauties of fancy and fiction."

The preferment to the office of Laureate is an epoch in Whitehead's life. From that moment he was fiercely assailed. On his appointment he received some congratulations, and among them from his friend Cambridge, who prophesies that he will be assailed, because of his elevation:

> "Tis so, though we're surpris'd to hear it,
> The Laurel is bestowed on merit.
> How hush'd is every envious voice,
> Confounded by so just a choice,
> Though by prescriptive right prepar'd
> To libel the selected bard."

We find that in a poem, called "Johnson's Laurel on the Contests of the Poets, London, 1785," the year of Whitehead's death, he is dismissed in one contemptuous and contemptible couplet—Mason, Hayley, Pratt, are described:

> "Next Whitehead came, his worth a pinch of snuff,
> But for a Laureate he was good enough."

His reputation did not suffer from some of the first attacks made on it, and he produced, in 1762, "The School for Lovers," a comedy, in five acts, which was

accepted by Garrick, and performed at Drury Lane, 11th of February, 1762. The plan is taken from a play of Fontenelle's, called "Le Testament." The dedication is strange, and runs thus: "To the memory of Monsieur de Fontenelle this comedy is inscribed, by a lover of simplicity, the Author." Garrick played Sir John Dorilant, and Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Yates took the three female characters. The dialogue is sprightly and elegant, and the plot clear and well-arranged; but it is all love, love *ab ovo usque ad mala.* It is a good sentimental comedy, and with such acting as Garrick's and Mrs. Cibber's was not unlikely to be successful.

In the same year he gave to the world his Charge to the poets. Coleridge in his "Biographia Literaria," says: "Whitehead, exerting the prerogative of his Laureateship, addressed to youthful poets a poetic charge which is perhaps the best, and certainly the most interesting of his works." Had Coleridge carefully compared the various compositions of the Laureate, he could scarcely have ranked this with any of his dramatic writings, and it is inferior to some of his other poems. As Laureate, he supposes himself standing in the position of a bishop to his poetic brethren, who are the inferior clergy. That this is heavy humour, will appear without reading the poem. But if examined, it will be found, notwithstanding the foregoing criticism of Coleridge, that the execution is scarcely superior to the design. It had, however, the effect of exciting the wrath and satire of Churchill. He who "blazed the comet of a season," could not brook Whitehead's seeming arrogance in venturing to teach him and others, simply because fortune had conferred on him the laurel. Churchill, therefore, in the third book of a poem which he published soon after, assailed Whitehead in an invocation, in which he distinguishes the Laureate from Paul Whitehead, a

satirist who had been threatened with state prosecution for his fearless attacks on wickedness in high places.

"Come, Method, come in all thy pride,
Dulness and Whitehead by thy side;
Dulness and Method still are one,
And Whitehead is their darling son.

"Not he* whose pen above control,
Struck terror to the guilty soul,
Made Folly tremble through her state,
And villains blush at being great;
Whilst he himself with steady face,
Disdaining modesty and grace,
Could blunder on through thick and thin,
Through every mean and servile sin,
Yet swear by Philip and by Paul,
He nobly scorn'd to blush at all.

"But he who in the Laureate chair,
By grace, not merit, planted there,
In awkward pomp is seen to sit,
And by his patent proves his wit;
For favours of the great we know,
Can wit as well as rank bestow,
And they who without one pretension,
Can get the fools a place or pension,
Must able be suppos'd of course
(If reason be allowed due course)
To gain such qualities and grace
As may equip them for the place.

"But he who measures as he goes,
A mongrel kind of tinkling prose,
And is too frugal to dispense
At once both poetry and sense;
Who, from amidst his slumbering guards
Deals out a charge to subject bards,
Where couplets after couplets creep,
Propitious to the reign of sleep;
Yet every word imprints an awe,
And all his dictates pass for law,
With beaux who simper all around,
And belles who die in every sound,
For in all things of this relation,
Men mostly judge from situation."

* Paul Whitehead.

Churchill, who had built up the fame of Garrick on the ruin of other reputations in "The Rosciad," quite destroyed the modicum of fame Whitehead had gained. If compared with Dryden's attack on Shadwell, and Pope's on Cibber, they are far fairer than either, as a judgment on the man and his works. Nevertheless, the sarcasms are too savage and the censure more than was called for. The lines, however, did their work of destruction. It is said that, in consequence of the effect they produced on the small world of letters of those days, Garrick, who had previously accepted two tragedies and a comedy, refused another tragedy. What this play was, there is no evidence to show, unless it was a fragment of a drama called "Œdipus," afterwards finished by Mr. Mason. There is, however, no doubt that a farce called "A Trip to Scotland," which he offered to Garrick, was accepted only on the condition that it should be played without the authorship being revealed; nor until it was completely successful, was it known that this amusing little production was from the pen of the Laureate, now in his fifty-fifth year. It was acted at Drury Lane in January, 1770, and when afterwards published was dedicated to Garrick:

"Dear Sir,

"The following little whimsical trifle cannot with propriety be addressed to any one but you. It was owing to your permission that it ever appeared upon the stage at all; and it is greatly indebted to the same friendly partiality, that it still continues to amuse the town. I take this public opportunity of thanking you for the trouble you have given yourself about so slight a thing, and with great pleasure subscribe myself,

"Dear Sir,

"Your obliged and humble servant,

"The Author."

It is a clever little farce, the story founded on a runaway match. There is some broad humour in it; but the dialogue is not brilliant, and no punning is attempted. The Cupid is a postboy, and the farce differs from most others in this: that there are interludes, and the postboy Cupid is gifted with a supernatural power of changing the scenes and filling up the plot by rhyming narrative. Its having been accepted anonymously, shows clearly enough the wonderful effect of Churchill's satire. Whitehead, as Campbell has observed, was too amiable to reply. He could not have penned verses so bitter, but to the strength of his moral qualities, rather than a deficiency in intellectual power, his silence is to be attributed. What he thought of his brilliant antagonist may be guessed from this fragment, printed in the edition of his works published after his death:

> "So from his common place, when Churchill strings
> Into some motley form his damn'd good things,
> The purple patches everywhere prevail,
> But the poor work has neither head nor tail."

Elsewhere he writes:

> "Churchill had strength of thought, had power to paint,
> Nor felt from principles the least restraint,
> From hell itself his characters he drew,
> And christened them by ev'ry name he knew;
> For 'twas from hearsay he picked up his tales,
> Where false and true by accident prevails:
> Hence I, though older far, have lived to see
> Churchill forgot, an empty shade like me."

The following lines on the same subject were found by Mr. Mason:

> "That I'm his foe, ev'n Churchill can't pretend,
> But—thank my stars!—he proves I am no friend:
> Yet, Churchill, could an honest wish succeed,
> I'd prove myself to thee a friend indeed;
> For had I power, like that which bends the spheres
> To music never heard by mortal ears,
> Where, in his system, sits the central sun,
> And drags reluctant planets into tune;

So would I bridle thy eccentric soul,
In Reason's sober orbit bid it roll;
Spite of thyself would make thy rancour cease,
Preserve thy present fame and future peace,
And teach thy Muse no vulgar place to find,
In the full moral chorus of mankind."

In 1774 he collected his plays and poems, and published them in two volumes. His advertisement to the edition is as follows: "Most of the pieces contained in these volumes have already had their fate with the public; and would probably never have been collected in the manner in which they now appear, if the author had not imagined that his character as Laureate obliged him in some measure to revise and correct them. If in their present state they have any degree of real merit belonging to them, they will support themselves. If they are so unfortunate as to want it, they will naturally sink into the oblivion they deserve" This prophecy has well-nigh been fulfilled. English poetry abounds in so much that is good, that what is second-rate, is little likely to be read; but in most ages contemporary verse is read and praised which is very inferior to some laid on the shelf belonging to years gone by. Those who find time to read some of the meagre and mediocre verse of the day, would find more pathos and beauty in the dramas, and more good sense in the didactic poems of Whitehead, than they at present suppose.

In 1776 he published a story in octosyllables, called "Variety," a tale for married people, quoted by Campbell in his specimen of British poets. It is very nicely told. There is a song by him for Ranelagh, of which the first and the last stanzas are so applicable to modern Bloomerism that it must be quoted.

"Ye belles and ye flirts, and ye pert little things,
Who trip in this frolicksome round,
Pray tell me from whence this impertinence springs,
The sexes at once to confound?

What mean the cock'd hat and the masculine air,
With each motion designed to perplex?
Bright eyes were intended to languish, not stare,
And softness the test of your sex.

"The blushes of morn, and the mildness of May,
Are charms which no art can procure,
O, be but yourselves, and our homage we pay,
And your empire is solid and sure,
But if, Amazon-like, you attack your gallants,
And put us in fear of our lives,
You may do very well for sisters and aunts,
But, believe me, you'll never be wives."

He seems to have possessed some influence with Garrick, a man whose authority carried great weight in literary as well as dramatic matters.

Murphy, in his life of Garrick, expresses warm gratitude to the Laureate for his kind and equitable decision of a matter in which he was himself a principal. He had written a drama called "The Orphan of China," which he sent to Garrick. The play was refused. Murphy thought himself hardly treated, and commenced a paper war against the manager. Garrick made his complaint at Holland House. Fox asked Murphy why he had shown so much animosity. Murphy replied that to publicly assail Garrick was, because of his extreme sensitiveness, his only chance of success: that the fate of the "Orphan" depended on it. At Fox's request the play was sent to Holland House, and he and Horace Walpole read it together. On the following Sunday Garrick was a guest there, and Fox and Walpole quoted to him some lines from it. He was startled; he had not, as managers are said now-a-days to do, returned the play without reading it, but had undervalued its merits. He was now struck by the lines quoted, and begged for the play, which he took again under his consideration, and accepted. Soon after this a *good-natured* friend repeated to Mr. Garrick some angry and depreciatory remark which Murphy had made on him. The thin-skinned

manager was furious, and again refused the play. The author made a firm stand, and declared he would not be trampled on. An interview took place, when it was arranged that the difference should be referred to the arbitration of Whitehead. He was then staying at Bath, and to this place the distressed "Orphan" was sent for its health. Whitehead would not consent to be the arbitrator of the whole difference, but agreed to give a candid opinion on the merits of the play. On reading it, he was so pleased that he went beyond his promise, and not only praised the drama, but said that the manager ought to accept it, and predicted that it would be a favourite with the public. This healed the breach, and the "Orphan" was re-accepted. Garrick, as was his custom, read it to the company, with his usual powerful intonation, giving every passage its full effect, but as he went on he suggested some emendation. In the fifth act he proposed a large alteration; Whitehead who was present, gave him the following delicate and witty reproof: "Mr. Garrick," said he, "there are so many beauties in this play, that for the sake of us who may hereafter write for the stage, I beg we may have no more." This specimen of Whitehead's conversational talent would make us suspect Boswell's judgment, when in speaking of Mason's "Life of Whitehead," he remarks: "I do not think it was quite necessary to attempt a depreciation of what is universally esteemed, because it was not to be found in the immediate object of the ingenious writer's pen; for, in truth, from a man so still and so tame, as to be contented to pass many years as the domestic companion of a superannuated lord and lady, conversation could no more be expected, than from a Chinese Mandarin on a chimney-place, or the fantastic figures on a gilt leather screen." Boswell's flunkeyism may have had some hero worship in it not to be found in Whitehead's; but after all, there is nothing

very degrading in a man's continuing to reside in a family where he enjoyed a life of literary leisure, and was treated as a welcome guest and an esteemed friend.*

It would seem that Boswell was, as usual, merely following the Doctor, who said: "Whitehead is but a little man to inscribe verses to players." Here we see Johnson's bile against Garrick showing itself. Whitehead had, as we have seen, dedicated his farce to him, and in some lines to the great actor he had written:

"A nation's taste depends on you,
Perhaps a nation's virtue too;
O, think how glorious 'twere to raise,
A Theatre to virtue's praise,
Where no indignant blush might rise,
Nor wit be taught to plead for vice.
But every young, attentive ear,
Imbibe the precepts living there.
And ev'ry inexperienced breast
There feel its own rude hints exprest,
And wakened by the glowing scene,
Unfold the worth that lurks within."

When Garrick revived "Every Man in his Humour," Whitehead was called on to write a prologue, which is to be found among his works. Garrick had been very successful as Abel Drugger in "The Alchymist," and determined on acting in another of Jonson's plays.

In 1777 Whitehead wrote "The Goat's Beard." After

* There was no very warm affection between the Doctor and Mason. The latter concludes his Memoir of Whitehead by a sneering parody on the elevated style of the great Dr. Samuel: "Those readers who believe that I do not write immediately under his (namely, the bookseller's) pay, and who may have gathered from what they have already read that I am not so passionately enamoured of Dr. Johnson's biographical manner, as to take that for my model, have only to throw these pages aside, and wait till they are new-written by some one of his numerous disciples who may follow his master's example; and should more anecdotes than I furnish him with be wanting (as was the Doctor's case in his life of Mr. Gray), may make amends for it by those *acid eructations of vituperative criticism, which are generated by unconcocted taste, and intellectual indigestion.*"

this he published nothing except his annual ode, which he never neglected. Indeed death, after many years of tranquil old age, passed in his lodging in London, and at the seat of his noble friends and patrons, overtook him while employed on a birthday ode. He had visited Lord Harcourt in the morning, and went to bed seemingly well, but expired next morning very suddenly, April 14th, 1785, in the seventieth year of his age. He was buried in South Audley Street Chapel.

## REVEREND THOMAS WARTON.

The life of an Oxford student affords but indifferent materials for the writer of biography. Undiversified by incident, it glides along as tranquilly as doth the tideless Isis through its level and unromantic but beautiful meadows. And for that inner life, which, in the meanest, is a romance and a mystery, who may depict it, even when himself is his hero? Those, therefore, who die and make no sign, can rarely awaken the interest of posterity; and insensibly their fame diminishes, until a few dates are all we have to tell the story of their lives and of their works.

Thomas Warton sprang from a family conspicuous for its literary attainments, and its hereditary loyalty. His ancestors were settled at Beverley in Yorkshire, one of whom was knighted by Charles I., and the family estate was confiscated for their attachment to the royal cause during the Civil War. His father was sometime Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, Professor of Poetry in that University, and Rector of Basingstoke in Hampshire, where the subject of this Memoir was born, in 1728. From his earliest years he displayed a studious

turn of mind; and a metrical translation of an epigram of Martial is extant which he wrote when he was about nine years old. In March 1743, when in his sixteenth year, he was entered at Trinity College, Oxford (on which foundation he was successively elected a scholar and fellow), passed there the remaining forty-seven years of his life, and now sleeps in the College Chapel.

While an undergraduate, he occasionally published some pieces anonymously; but in 1749, when in his 21st year, he first came forward openly as a poet, and the circumstances under which he made his *debût*, conspired to cover him with glory, or at least with applause. It should be remembered that the relative position of the Universities and the country was widely different then from what it is at present. Our material interests having advanced with such unparallelled rapidity, intellectual pursuits have lost that prominence they formerly possessed. They, too, have changed the theatre of their more active exercise; and the time has gone by when Oxford prescribed the canons of taste, and the decision of a London audience on the merits of a play was held liable to reversal by the Universities. The political views of the two great seats of learning were then matter of grave concern to the Government; and, Oxford being suspected of Jacobite tendencies, a foolish frolic of a party of students, gave great offence to the Court, and the Vice-Chancellor and some of the Heads of Houses were prosecuted in the Queen's Bench. Mason, a Cambridge man, and of the governmental faction, embraced so tempting an occasion to inveigh against the rival University, and published a poem, named "Isis," in which that gentle river nymph thus wrathfully addresses the wine-bibbing students of Oxford.

"Hence! frontless crowds, that not content to fright
The blushing Cynthia from her throne of light,

Blast the fair face of day; and, madly bold,
To Freedom's foes infernal orgies hold."

Warton was solicited to write a reply, and published accordingly the "Triumph of Isis," in which, after a satirical sneer at the "venal sons of slavish Cam," he proceeds to the defence of his University with considerable dignity, recounts some of the great names that adorn her annals, and concludes with a panegyric on her reputed founder, King Alfred.

The following extracts will afford a specimen of the style of this piece—

"Ye fretted pinnacles, ye fanes sublime,
Ye towers that wear the mossy vest of Time,
Ye massy piles of old munificence,
At once the pride of learning and defence;
Ye high-arched walks, where oft the whispers clear
Of harps unseen, have swept the poet's ear;
Ye temples dim, where pious duty pays,
Her holy hymns of ever-echoing praise;
Lo! your loved Isis, from the bordering vale,
With all a mother's fondness bids you hail!
Hail, Oxford, hail! of all that's good and great,
Of all that's fair, the guardian and the seat;
Nurse of each brave pursuit, each generous aim,
By truth exalted to the throne of fame!
Like Greece in science and in liberty,
As Athens learned, as Lacedæmon free."

Edward the Black Prince, who was a member of Queen's College, is thus referred to.

"Nor all the tasks of thoughtful peace engage,
'Tis thine to form the hero as the sage,
I see the sable-tinted Prince advance,
With lilies crown'd, the spoil of bleeding France,
Edward. The Muses in yon cloistered shade,
Bound on his maiden thigh the martial blade,
Bade him the steel for British Freedom draw,
And Oxford taught the deeds that Cressy saw."

At that time the Bachelors and Gentlemen Commoners of Trinity had a common room of their own. It was

customary to elect annually from among themselves certain officers, and among others a poet-laureate, whose privilege it was to celebrate in verse their lady patroness for the year. The choice fell on Warton in the years 1747 and 1748, and the verses he composed in that capacity are still preserved in the common room.

In 1750 he took the degree of Master of Arts, and the next year was elected a Fellow of his College.

As Oxford had now become his final home, he undertook an extensive course of study, which he pursued in a somewhat desultory and immethodical manner. He drew up, at the request of the Head of his College, a body of Statutes for the Radcliffe Library, founded principally on the Bodleian and Savilian Statutes; and in 1754 he published his "Observations on Spenser's Faëry Queen," a work displaying great powers of criticism and extensive reading. He sent a copy of the book to Dr. Johnson, who returned him a complimentary letter, and it was the means of introducing him to the friendship of Warburton. By a note, in the second edition, upon the Ecclesiastical Architecture of England, he contributed materially to arouse that spirit of inquiry into the almost forgotten principles of Gothic art, which has since been so fervently prosecuted; and he meditated writing a comprehensive history of its progress in this country. In fact, he projected, at this time, several important works, which were never carried to completion. His pupils occupied much of his time, and though he published at intervals various short essays on subjects of classical and antiquarian interest, yet the learned ease of a University was not adapted to urge a man of his temperament to any long sustained and laborious effort.

In 1757 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and, by the advice of Sir W. Blackstone, then Fellow of All Souls, signalized the term of his office by a careful

edition of the works of Theocritus ; he was likewise chosen a Fellow of the Royal Society, and towards the close of the same year was instituted to the Rectory of Cuddington, near Oxford. He busied himself in collecting Notes for the edition of Shakspeare which Johnson was preparing, contributed some papers to the "Idler," and became a member of the famous Literary Club. The intimacy between Johnson and Warton, at this time, was most cordial, though it afterwards gradually cooled. Their modes of life were different. Warton was methodical in his habits, rose early, took exercise at stated intervals ; while Johnson's rugged training had inured him to irregularities of living which time at length rendered habitual. Differences of taste, likewise, contributed to widen the breach. Johnson thought little of Warton's poetical powers ; while Warton, admiring Johnson's prodigious intellectual capacity, hesitated to give him credit for taste or scholarship. And thus, without any open rupture, their friendship degenerated into a feeling bordering closely upon dislike.

Warton testified his affection to his College by writing the Biography of Sir Thomas Pope, the founder, and of Dr. Bathurst, a munificent benefactor. A circumstance related in one of these works may serve to show on what a precarious tenure college fellowships were once held. Cuffe, Fellow of Trinity, a man of extraordinary endowments, but of a hilarious disposition, was dismissed the society for giving vent to a sprightly sally at the expense of the founder. Sir Thomas, it appears, when invited to any entertainment, indulged in the singular propensity of pocketing some of the plate on his departure. "Our friend," says Bathurst, "when upon a visit, would often carry away a silver cup under his gown, for the joke sake, sending it back the next day to laugh at his friend." Cuffe, being at a party one evening, in

another college, in a moment of thoughtlessness, exclaimed, "This is a beggarly college indeed, the plate that our founder *stole* would build another as good." For this irreverent exclamation, Cuffe was formally deprived of his fellowship, sacrificed for a jest to the outraged memory of the joke-loving Sir Thomas; and Warton, with amusing gravity, justifies the expulsion, because "he wantonly converted one of his practical jokes, a species of humour not uncommon among our festive ancestors, into a petty larceny."*

An incident in the life of Bathurst may excite a smile. No college in Oxford suffered more severely in the Civil Wars than Balliol. After the Restoration, Trinity, which had been more fortunate, soon recovered itself, but the blackened walls of Balliol remained for years a picture of desolation, and a sad memento of the fury of factious animosity. One side of the building looks into the gardens of Trinity, and Bathurst, then head of his

* Poor Cuffe! his joviality had a sad termination:

"Doctus eras Græce felixque tibi fuit Alpha
At fuit infelix Omega Cuffe tuum."

One of the best Greek scholars of his day, a wit, an author, and the friend of Camden, he was tried for his life and hanged at Tyburn. Arraigned as a culprit, he had to endure the unfeeling insolence of Coke, and when he was no more, Lord Bacon stooped to blacken his memory; his only apparent crime was, that he had been secretary to the unfortunate Earl of Essex. The following has been handed down as the speech he delivered at the place of execution, which, though its authenticity cannot be precisely determined, merits preservation for its nervous brevity, and an energy so characteristic of its reputed author: "I am here adjudged to die for acting an act never plotted, for plotting a plot never acted. Justice will have her course; accusers must be heard; greatness will have the victory. Scholars and martialists (though learning and valour should have the pre-eminence) in England must die like dogs, and be hanged. To mislike this, were but folly; to dislike it, but time lost; to alter it, impossible. But to endure it, is manly; and to scorn it, magnanimity. The Queen is displeased, the Lawyers injurious, and Death terrible. But I crave pardon of the Queen; forgive the Lawyers and the world; desire to be forgiven, and welcome Death." He died on the 30th of March, 1601.

college, a discreet and grave divine, was observed in his garden one afternoon, wreaking his wrath on the shattered remains of his once proud rival, "throwing stones at the windows with much satisfaction, as if happy to contribute his share in completing the appearance of its ruin." This extraordinary act, Warton calmly styles "a striking instance of zeal for his college."

In 1764, was published "The Oxford Sausage, or Select Poetical Pieces written by the most celebrated wits of the University of Oxford," to which our poet was one of the principal contributors.

His studies having been mainly directed to the early English writers, an extensive and interesting field of research at that time comparatively neglected; he, this year, gave to the world the first volume of his "History of English Poetry," a valuable production which, though convicted of some inaccuracies, at once filled a void and occupied a position in English literature which succeeding and rival publications have only tended to confirm. A second and third volume were published, at intervals of four and three years, bringing the work down to the reign of Elizabeth; but a fourth and fifth volume, which were to continue the history to the eighteenth century were never composed. The somewhat abrupt termination of the design has been regretted as the effect of indolence. It might have been, the author felt a growing incapacity for the task.

Warton was a scholar and an antiquarian. To such a man, old books, written in an obsolete style, afforded positive pleasure. The difficulties that deterred ordinary readers were a fascination to him—and who so capable as he to estimate the worth of those antique effusions, and to assign them their deserved position in the scale of literary merit? But when the language had undergone a significant transmutation, and other principles were at

work, and other faculties were needful for the task, Warton, whose mind was discursive rather than reflective, estimating justly, and therefore mistrusting his own powers, may purposely have abstained from the completion of a design, the end of which would have been so disproportionate to the commencement. The studious omission of all mention of the dramatic writers which, in a history of the literature of the Elizabethan age, is like performing the play of "Hamlet," with the part of Hamlet omitted, would seem to countenance this hypothesis.

Architecture and topography having always been favourite subjects of study with him, he now meditated a congenial work, "The History of his favourite county, Oxfordshire," of which the description of his own parish was sent forth as a specimen. He took a prominent part in the controversy respecting the Chatterton papers, proving their spuriousness from internal evidence with singular sagacity and acuteness; and on the death of Whitehead, in 1785, he accepted the office of Poet-Laureate.

The Laureates, like Falstaff, have been a fruitful occasion of wit in other men; and a *jeu d'esprit* appeared on the occasion, entitled "Probationary Odes," a copy of which was forwarded to Warton by the editor. All the pieces in the book were burlesques but one, and that solitary exception was Warton's own, the one he had just written in the year of his appointment. It happened to be about the worst composition that ever proceeded from his pen, and the heartless humourist had inserted it *verbatim*, as if it was itself a burlesque in its inimitable bathos.

He lived, however, to vindicate his office and reputation; and we must go back to the time of Dryden to find any birthday odes comparable to his in merit. On the resignation of Lord Stowell as Camden Professor of

History, he was appointed his successor; nearly twenty years before, he had been a candidate for the professorship of modern history, but was put aside for Vivian, fellow of Balliol. A consolatory letter of Warburton is extant, in which that distinguished divine applauds his fortitude under the disappointment, and delicately informs him that his successful rival was suffering from an internal disease, which would most probably soon prove fatal!

The last work of importance on which he was engaged was the fulfilment of a design he had meditated nearly half a century, an edition of the minor and then but little known poems of Milton. His principal object in this publication was, as he himself declares, "to explain his author's allusions, to illustrate or to vindicate his beauties, to point out his imitations both of others and of himself, to elucidate his obsolete diction, and by the adduction and juxta-position of parallels universally gleaned both from his poetry and his prose, to ascertain his favourite words, and to show the peculiarities of his phraseology."

The sale of the book was unusually rapid, and he was meditating a new and more complete edition of his own poems, when the summons arrived which suspended all his labours. His end was painfully sudden. For sixty-two years he had enjoyed unbroken health, when he was seized by a severe attack of the gout. He went to Bath for medical aid, and returned, as he thought, restored; but those who knew him, beheld at once that a fatal change had passed over him. On Thursday, the 20th of May, 1790, he went as usual, after Hall, into the common room, and, always jocular among friends, it was remarked that evening, that he was more than ordinarily cheerful. Between ten and eleven, he was struck with paralysis, and by two o'clock the next day he was no more. His elder and only brother, Joseph, head master of Winchester School, with whom he had generally spent the long vaca-

tion, hastened to Oxford, but arrived too late to witness the closing scene. He was buried on the 27th, with the highest academical pomp, the Vice-Chancellor, the Heads of Houses, and the Proctors, at their own request, attending his funeral.

The influence of Warton upon English literature has been great; greater than at the first glance we should imagine; not from any peculiar force of mind stamping its impress on his own age, and giving a direction to the thinkings of posterity; but from his opportune appearance, and the accidental bent of his studies. Himself a traveller in unaccustomed regions of research, he pointed out the way to that wide field of romantic literature which had become almost a shadowy land to his contemporaries, and told of the exuberance and strength of our earlier writers, to those whose tastes had been formed on the faultless classicalism of the era of Anne. Spenser and Milton were his favourite authors through life. His affection for them never wavered. His first prose work was a tribute to Spenser, his last important occupation an edition of the lesser poems of Milton. His fondness for these two authors cramped his own freedom of expression, as his ideas conformed too readily to turns of phraseology which constant study had rendered so familiar.

The ingenious author of "Hermes" distinguishes three species of criticism: philosophical, historical, and corrective; and places the writings of Warton under the second category. Without attempting to analyse the principles of art, he contents himself with examining their outward form and expression, and is occupied solely with the subordinate though useful labour of explaining obsolete words and phrases, and of applying his historical learning to the elucidation of obscure allusions.

As a poet, he possessed imagination, fancy, and copiousness, but he never attempted to touch the heart or to stir

the passions. His diction is characterized by a rough vigour, which compensates, by its perspicuity and force for its want of grace and harmony. His allusions and illustrations are apt and frequent. His descriptions of natural scenery picturesque and impressive, but they are redolent of the dust of the library, rather than of the pure breezes of Heaven. He was throughout the poet of the closet. There was a constraint and an artificiality in all his movements. His life vibrated between Oxford and Winchester, the associations of those two ancient and interesting cities were in unison with his predilections; and while meditating his measured music, his eye wandered from the distant mountain to linger on the old cathedral. When he transferred his impressions to the page, he trusted too little to his own powers of originality. He endeavoured to describe, as he fancied, his favourite Spenser or Milton would have done; and thus, though his genius was too great to allow him to sink into the mere copyist or imitator, he fell short of the position his powers justify us in thinking he might otherwise have attained. Yet his intimate knowledge of the customs of the middle ages, gives at times a variety to his page that looks like life, and we can almost catch the fluttering of that gorgeous mantle which Sir Walter Scott afterwards wore with such natural ease and grace.

To his principal work the "History of English Poetry," it is unnecessary to make further reference. It has found a permanent place in every English library. Its extensive and varied research, its perspicuous style, and the complete mastery of the subject discernible throughout, have rendered it a text-book to the student of our older literature. The labour necessary for such a work must have been long and severe. He had to grope his way through the dark bye-paths of a forgotten land, without any ancillary aid. He had first to discover the quarry, and then hew

out his materials. The light which recent historians have thrown upon those times, and the present more domestic tendency of general study, unfits us to appreciate the magnitude and merit of the task; and it would be an interesting inquiry, how far the example of Warton has excited the ambition of more recent aspirants to attempt for the history what he has done for the literature of this country.

In person, Warton was at one time short, slim, and handsome; but, as he advanced in years, attained that rotundity of figure, which was the prevailing type of a resident fellow in the past century, and of which a few scattered specimens remain to shame the more wearied workers of a different age. Though silent and shy in company, he was all mirth and hilarity among his associates an inveterate punster, when such word-bandying gave the reputation of wit; the life of the common room; without a tincture of vulgar pretension, but always ready to communicate the results of his application when the conversation turned upon his peculiar studies. His manners, however, were not graceful, he was negligent in his dress; and Johnson, with expressive coarseness, compared his manner of speaking to the gobble of a turkey-cock. Though fond of society, and enjoying an extensive circle of acquaintance, he seldom visited beyond the walls of his College. He rose early, devoted a portion of every day to study, and under the guise of indolence, whether sauntering by the Cherwell, or lounging in the Bodleian, his mind was ever active, methodising and classifying the acquirements of the morning's labour.

Biography, which usually delineates imaginary beings and not men, has not disdained in this instance to record that the Poet-Laureate had some tastes not entirely in unison with his position and functions. He enjoyed his

ale, his pipe, and his jest, with persons of mean condition; and would convulse the tap-room with the sportive sallies that had previously enlivened the common room. He was inordinately attached to sight-seeing, a taste shared by the late eloquent and accomplished Lord Stowell; and once descended to disguise himself as a carter, to witness some public exhibition at London. In heart he was a boy to the last, and a universal favourite at Winchester. "How many faults?" was his question to an indolent urchin asking him to do his exercise, and according to the answer so the work was done; while the chance of a flogging was as great for what Warton had written as for what the tyro might have performed himself. On one occasion, a boy's ambition or fear overcame his judgment, and the exercise was above his average efforts. The Doctor suspecting the cheat, ordered the delinquent into his study, and sent for his brother. When Warton arrived, the exercise was read before him, and he affected to think most highly of its merit. "Don't you think it worth half-a-crown, Mr. Warton?" said the Doctor. Warton thought the boy really deserved such a recompense. "Well then, you give him one," was the reply; and Warton paid the half-crown for his own verses; his brother inwardly chuckling at the joke.

He was once busily employed in the kitchen helping some of the boys to cook some abstracted viands. Suddenly the Doctor's tread was heard upon the stairs; every one decamped, and the irate dignitary searching for the culprits, drew from an obscure hiding-place—his own brother.

These simple traits will give a better idea of the character of the man than the most laboured analysis. In conclusion we select the following odes as illustrative of the Laureate's style.

## ODE ON HIS MAJESTY'S BIRTH-DAY,

### JUNE 4, 1787.

I.

The noblest bards of Albion's choir
Have struck of old this festal lyre.
Ere Science, struggling oft in vain,
Had dared to break her Gothic chain.
Victorious Edward gave the vernal bough,
Of Britain's bay to bloom on Chaucer's brow:
Fired with the gift, he changed to sounds sublime
His Norman minstrelsy's discordant chime;
In tones majestic hence he told
The banquet of Cambuscan bold;
And oft he sang (howe'er the rhyme
Has moulder'd to the touch of time)
His martial master's knightly board,
And Arthur's ancient rites restored;
The prince in sable steel that sternly frown'd,
And Gallia's captive King, and Cressy's wreath renown'd.

II.

Won from the shepherd's simple meed,
The whispers wild of Mulla's reed,
Sage Spenser wak'd his lofty lay,
To grace Eliza's golden sway;
O'er the proud theme new lustre to diffuse,
He chose the gorgeous allegoric muse,
And call'd to life old Uther's elfin tale,
And rov'd through many a necromantic vale,
Pourtraying chiefs that knew to tame
The goblin's ire, the dragon's flame,
To pierce the dark enchanted hall,
Where Virtue sat in lonely thrall.
From fabling Fancy's inmost store
A rich, romantic robe he bore;
A veil with visionary trappings hung,
And o'er his virgin-queen the fairy texture flung.

III.

At length the matchless Dryden came,
To light the Muses' clearer flame;
To lofty numbers grace to lend,
And strength with melody to blend;

To triumph in the bold career of song,
And roll the unwearied energy along.
Does the mean incense of promiscuous praise,
Does servile fear disgrace his regal bays?
I spurn his panegyric strings,
His partial homage tuned to kings!
Be mine, to catch his manlier chord,
That paints th' impassion'd Persian lord,
By glory fir'd, to pity su'd,
Roused to revenge, by love subdued;
And still, with transport new, the strains to trace,
That chant the Theban fair, and Tancred's deadly vase.

IV.

Had these blest bards been call'd to pay
The vows of this auspicious day,
Each had confess'd a fairer throne,
A mightier sovereign than his own!
Chaucer had made his hero-monarch yield
The martial fame of Cressy's well-fought field
To peaceful prowess, and the conquests calm,
That braid the sceptre with the patriot's palm:
His chaplets of fantastic bloom,
His colorings warm from Fiction's loom
Spenser had cast in scorn away,
And deck'd with truth alone the lay;
All real here, the Bard had seen,
The glories of his pictur'd Queen!
The tuneful Dryden had not flatter'd here,
His lyre had blameless been, his tribute all sincere.

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## ODE FOR THE NEW YEAR.

### 1788.

I.

Rude was the pile, and massy proof,
That first uprear'd its haughty roof
On Windsor's brow sublime, in warlike state:
The Norman tyrant's jealous hand
The giant fabric proudly plann'd:
With recent victory elate,
On this majestic steep, he cried,
A regal fortress threatening wide,

Shall spread my terrors to the distant hills;
Its formidable shade shall throw
Far o'er the broad expanse below,
Where winds yon mighty flood, and amply fills
With flowery verdure, or with golden grain,
The fairest fields that deck my new domain.
And London's towers, that reach the watchman's eye,
Shall see with conscious awe my bulwark climb the sky.

II.

Unchang'd, through many a hardy race,
Stood the rough dome in sullen grace;
Still on its angry front defiance frown'd,
Though monarchs kept their state within,
Still murmur'd with the martial din,
The gloomy gateway's arch profound,
And armed forms, in airy rows,
Bent o'er the battlements their bows,
And blood-stained banners crown'd its hostile head;
And oft its hoary ramparts wore
The rugged scars of conflict sore;
What time, pavilion'd on the neighbouring mead,
The indignant Barons ranged in bright array
Their feudal bands, to curb despotic sway;
And leagued a Briton's birth-right to restore
From John's reluctant grasp, the roll of Freedom bore.

III.

When, lo! the King,* that wreath'd his shield
With lilies pluck'd on Cressy's field,
Heaved from its base the mouldering Norman frame!
New glory cloth'd the exulting steep,
The portals tower'd with ampler sweet;
And Valour's soften'd Genius came,
Here held his pomp, and trail'd the pall
Of triumph through the trophied hall;
And War was clad awhile in gorgeous weeds;
Amid the martial pageantries,
While Beauty's glance adjudg'd the prize,
And beam'd sweet influence on heroic deeds.
Nor long, ere Henry's† holy zeal, to breathe
A milder charm upon the scene beneath,
Rear'd in the watery glade his classic shrine,
And call'd his stripling quire to woo the willing Nine.

* Edward III. † Henry VI, Founder of Eton College.

IV.

To this imperial seat to lend
Its pride supreme, and nobly blend
British magnificence with Attic art.
Proud Castle, to thy banner'd bowers,
Lo! Picture bids her glowing powers
Their bold historic groups impart:
She bids the illuminated pane,
Along thy lofty-vaulted fane,
Shed the dim blaze of radiance richly clear.
Still may such arts of Peace engage
Their Patron's care! But should the rage
Of war to battle rouse the new-born year,
Britain, arise, and wake the slumbering fire;
Vindictive dart thy quick-rekindling ire!
Or, armed to strike, in mercy spare the foe,
And lift thy thundering hand, and then withhold the blow!

## HENRY JAMES PYE.

Lord Byron has observed with characteristic flippancy, that Pye was "a man eminently respectable in everything but his poetry." Had this been precisely true, the Laureate would have been so exactly his Lordship's antithesis, that there is little cause for wondering at his satirizing him. If he had called the poet's verses *respectable*, the statement would have been more true, and therefore more libellous; for *respectable* poetry is of the kind which neither gods, men, nor columns countenance; and we are afraid that, with all our reverence for Mr. Pye as a man of ancient family, unimpeachable character, and high position, we must admit that, as a poet, his Muse's chief attributes are Mediocrity and Morality. In pronouncing this judgment, we allude to him simply under the poetic aspect; for the slightest knowledge of his voluminous writings will show that his intellect had been highly cultivated, and that he possessed erudition, judgment, and sense.

"The Pyes," says Noble, in his "Memoirs of the House of Cromwell," "are a most ancient and honourable

family, from whom two of the English kings descended. The etymology of the name of Pye, is ap Hugh, the letter *u* having the same sound in Welch as *y;* the family conformed to the Welch manner, from residing near that Principality; they bear for their arms, ermine, a bend lozengy, gules. William Pye came over with the Norman Conqueror; and his family became champions to the first kings of that race. Hugh Pye, probably his son, was lord of Kilpec Castle, in the Mynde Park, in Herefordshire; he had two sons, Thomas Pye de Kilpec and John."

The family ancient, as it was, had an additional lustre thrown on it when one of the Laureate's ancestors married the daughter of John Hampden. His father was Auditor of the Exchequer in the reign of James I. It was therefore his duty to pay to Ben Jonson the income (or rather part of it, for the marks had not then been increased to pounds), which his descendant afterwards received. There is a mendicant poetical epistle of the elder Laureate to Sir Robert Pye, to be found in Jonson's works.

"Father John Burgess,
Necesity urges
My woeful cry
To Sir Robert Pie;
And that he will venture
To send my debenture.
Tell him his Ben
Knew the time when
He loved the Muses;
Though now he refuses
To take apprehension
Of a year's pension,
And more is behind:
Put him in mind
Christmas is near,
And neither good cheer,
Mirth, fooling, or wit,
Nor any least fit

Of gambol or sport
Will come at the Court;
If there be no money,
No plover or coney
Will come to the table,
Or wine to enable
The Muse or the Poet—
The parish will know it.
Nor any quick warming-pan help him to bed—
If the chequer be empty, so will be his head."

The Auditor was deprived of his office during the Protectorate, but reinstated at the Restoration, and if we may trust Noble,* "procured a very large fortune for his family," and purchased the manor and seat of Faringdon, in Berks. His eldest son, Sir Robert, meanwhile sat for Woodstock, in the Long Parliament, and was a colonel of horse in Fairfax's regiment. Cromwell employed him, and during the Protectorate he represented Berkshire in two parliaments. He, however, was one of those who aided and abetted the Restoration, and after this retired into private life. He survived his wife, Hampden's daughter, only a week, and they were both buried in Faringdon Church.†

The subject of this memoir was therefore the lineal descendent of the celebrated patriot, and was the fourth in descent from Sir Robert, the son of the Auditor. He was the eldest son of Henry Pye, who had represented Berkshire in four different parliaments without a contested election. Henry James was born on the 10th of July, 1745, in London. Of his childhood, little or nothing is known. Under his father's roof he was instructed to the age of seventeen by a private tutor. He was when quite a child very fond of reading, and has himself stated,

* Memoirs of the House of Cromwell.

† Portraits of the Auditor and his son, Sir Robert, are to be found among other family pictures at Camfield Place, Herts, the seat of Baron Dimsdale.

what has been quoted in every biographical notice of him, that when he was about ten years of age, his father put Pope's translation of "Homer" into his hands, and that he experienced such delight in reading it, that it "fixed him a rhymer for life."

At the age of seventeen, he quitted the paternal roof, and entered as a gentleman-commoner at Magdalen College, Oxford. On his coming of age, he left the University, and just at this time his father died, and the son, only just twenty-one, succeeded to the paternal inheritance. Upon this occasion, he acted in an honourable and generous manner, which redounds greatly to his credit, but which occasioned him much future embarrassment. His father died with debts to the amount of £50,000; none of them, however, chargeable upon the estate. Notwithstanding this, the son defrayed the whole of them: and it was this, combined with losses which he suffered from a fire at his house in Bedfordshire, and the expense of rebuilding his house in Berks, which compelled him to sell his paternal estate. The notice which appeared in the Magazines at the time of his death, contained an error which has ever since been but too faithfully, and pertinaciously repeated, to the effect that he ruined himself by standing a contested election for Berks; whereas, the real causes of his embarrassment were those which we have stated, and it so happens that the contest in 1784 was not very expensive.*

The poet immediately after making over the paternal estate, married Miss Hooke, the sister of Lieutenant-Colonel Hooke. Only occasionally visiting London, he was an active and useful county magistrate, was for a great many years in the Berkshire Militia, and the account

* For a few details of this short Memoir, we are indebted to the courtesy of H. J. Pye, Esq., of Clifton Campville, Tamworth, and R. Dimsdale, Esq., of Essendon Place, Herts.

given of his habits is that he equally divided his time between these duties, his books, and the sports of the field, to which he was greatly attached. He has celebrated one of these sports in his poem on shooting, to which he prefixed a motto from Virgil, singularly appropriate to an invention not dreamed of when the lines were written.

"Volans liquidis in nubibus arsit
Signavitque viam flammis."

The poem is written in smooth heroics, and is as good as any didactic poetry on such subjects can very well be. After invoking "Sylvan Muses," and paying a tribute to Somerville, the author of "The Chase," he lays down special laws to be observed by sportsmen; and although he indulges an occasional digression, as, for instance, the story of Atys and Adrastus, he keeps in the main closely to his subject. We will give the reader one specimen.

"When the last sun of August's fiery reign
Now bathes his radiant forehead in the main,
The panoply by sportive heroes worn
Is rang'd in order for the ensuing morn;
Forth from the summer guard of bolt and lock
Comes the thick guêtre, and the fustian frock.
With curious skill, the deathful tube is made,
Clean as the firelock of the spruce parade:
Yet let no polish of the sportsman's gun
Flash like the soldier's weapon to the sun,
Or the bright steel's refulgent glare presume,
To penetrate the peaceful forest's gloom;
But let it take the brown's more sober hue,
Or the dark lustre of the enamell'd blue.
Let the close pouch the wadded tow contain,
The leaden pellets, and the nitrous grain;
And wisely cautious, with preventive care,
Be the spare flint and ready turnscrew there;
While the slung net is open to receive
Each prize the labours of the day shall give."

He enters with as much elaboration of detail, as in this passage, into the comparative merits of partridge, phea-

sant, and snipe shooting, and draws from all the usual moral in defence of field sports, that they harden our "sturdy youth," and educate us for the toils and perils of war.

Pye having been, as he expressed it, "fixed a rhymer for life," he seems to have preferred verse to prose, as the vehicle of his thoughts on any subject in which he might be at the time interested. Thus a theme was suggested by the scenery of his own immediate neighbourhood, and he wrote his poem on Faringdon Hill. "Aeriphorion," another of his poetical lucubrations, was called forth by the Laureate's seeing Mr. Sadler, the first English Aeronaut, ascend in a balloon at Oxford, in 1784. And when he was encamped at Coxheath, in 1778, he translated, in his leisure hours, during the peaceful campaign, the King of Prussia's poem "On the Art of War." We trust that some of the warriors on the plains of Chobham are amusing their philosophic minds after a fashion as intellectual. "This translation," writes Pye, in the Preface, "was the amusement of some of the many leisure hours that necessarily must fall to the lot of every one in a camp not of actual service, though under the command of a general, whose strict attention to the discipline of the regiments entrusted to his care, and whose unremitting diligence in forming the militia corps, will be gratefully remembered by every officer and soldier of that establishment, who wished to acquire a knowledge of the military profession, and not to lounge away a few months in idleness, debauchery, and dissipation." With the same military ardour he afterwards translated the "Elegies" of Tyrtæus, and some of his renderings are very spirited.

It had, however, become so much *the* joke in literature to laugh at the Laureate, that they did not escape the lash of the author of "Pursuits of Literature," who

alluding to two of Pye's works, his version of Tyrtæus, and his translation of a German story, speaks of him in the following couplet,

> "With Spartan Pye lull England to repose,
> Or frighten children with Lenora's woes:"

and appends to it the following remarks in the form of a note: "Mr. Pye, the present Poet-Laureate, with the best intentions at this momentous period, if not with the very best poetry, translated the verses of Tyrtæus the Spartan. They were designed to produce animation throughout the kingdom, and among the Militia in particular. Several of the Reviewing Generals (I do not mean the Monthly or Critical) were much impressed with their *weight* and importance; and, at a board of general officers, an experiment was agreed upon, which unfortunately failed. They were read aloud at Wanley Common, and at Barham Downs, by the adjutants, at the head of five different regiments, at each camp, and much was expected. But before they were half finished, all the front ranks, and as many of the others as were within hearing or verse shot, dropped their arms suddenly, and *were all found fast asleep.* Marquis Townshend, who never approved of the scheme, said, with his usual pleasantry, 'that the first of all poets observed that sleep is the brother of death.'"

We have, however, interrupted our narrative to allude to some of his writings.

In 1784 he contested the county of Bucks, and was returned to Parliament. In the House he never distinguished himself, and spoke but briefly on only three occasions. The first time that he rose was in the debate on Mr. Masham's bill for securing the freedom of elections; and of his other two yet shorter oratorical efforts, the

second was an explanation in reference to his relative, Sir Thomas Pye, who had been alluded to in the course of the debate; and, in the third, on a discussion on the hay exportation bill, in 1788, he informed the House that his constituents had suffered from a scanty hay harvest that year.

In 1790, his appointment to the Laureateship took place. Some of Warton's odes, of which we have presented the reader with a fair sample, had been really so much above the smooth mediocrity of Whitehead, and the absolute doggerel of Cibber, that Pye felt that his was a difficult task in succeeding to an office just vacated by a man of genius and taste. He therefore toiled to produce his two odes a-year with punctual precision, and elaborated them with careful industry. They are good rhetorical verse of the tumid kind. They breathe a spirit of ardent patriotism and devoted loyalty. That for his Majesty's birthday, June 4th, 1792, commences in the following rather magnificent style:

"Heard ye the blast, whose sullen roar
Burst dreadful from the angry skies?
Saw ye against the craggy shore
The waves in wild contention rise?"

and concludes with a direct allusion to the great occasion for which it was composed:

"To welcome George's natal hour,
No vain display of empty power,
In flattery steep'd, no soothing lay
Shall strains of adulation pay;
But Commerce rolling deep and wide
To Albion's shores her swelling tide,
But Themis' olive cinctur'd head,
And white rob'd Peace by Victory led,
Shall fill thy breast with virtuous pride,
Shall give him power to truth allied;
Joys which alone a patriot King can prove,
A nation's strength his power, his pride a people's love."

The "Ode for the New Year," 1797, blows the war-trumpet sonorously. The last stanza is as follows:

"Genius of Albion hear,
Grasp the strong shield, and shake the avenging spear.
By wreaths thy hardy sons of yore
From Gallia's crest victorious tore,
By Edward's lily-blazon'd shield;
By Agincourt's high trophy'd field;
By rash Iberia's naval pride,
Whelm'd by Eliza's barks beneath the stormy tide;
Call forth the warrior race again,
Breathing to ancient mood the soul-inspiring strain.
* To arms! your ensigns straight display!
Now set the battle in array,
The oracle for war declares,
Success depends upon our hearts and spears.
Britons, strike home! revenge your country's wrongs;
Fight, and record yourselves in Druid songs."

In the "Birthday Ode," for the year 1800, the Laureate breaks out into an imitation of our national anthem:

God of our fathers rise,
And through the thund'ring skies.
Thy vengeance urge.
In awful justice red,
Be thy dread arrows sped,
But guard our Monarch's head,
God save great George.

Still on our Albion smile,
Still o'er this favor'd isle,
O, spread thy wing!
To make each blessing sure,
To make our fame endure,
To make our rights secure,
God save our King!

To the loud trumpet's throat,
To the shrill clarion's note,
Now jocund sing.
From every open foe,
From every traitor's blow,
Virtue defend his brow.
God guard our King!

* The last six lines, were inserted at the especial request of the King.

In 1811, we find a *hiatus* (we scarcely think we can add *maxime deflendus*) in the "Annual Register," and the pages usually assigned to the two annual songs of the Laureate, are devoted to a long Cambridge Installation Ode,* by Professor Smyth, the lecturer on history. The Official Muse was silent also in 1812. Pye's not writing the requisite lays, arose from the fact that he had at this time retired from public life, and was suffering from severe attacks of gout. His zeal for his office he however had never failed to show, for in addition to his regular poetic offerings, he composed poems on public questions, and of a kind that would be pleasing to the Court and Government. His poem, "Naucratia, or Naval Dominion," published in 1798, he dedicated to his Sacred Majesty. In this lucubration he alludes to his ancestor, the famous patriot:

> "Arm'd in her cause on Chalgrove's fatal plain,
> Where sorrowing Freedom mourns her Hampden slain,
> Say, shall the moralizing bard presume,
> From his proud hearse to tear one warlike plume,
> Because a Cæsar or a Cromwell wore
> An impious wreath, wet with their country's gore?"

We quote these lines because of their subject, but they are by no means a fair specimen of the poem, in which there are some rather spirited passages. In speaking of Columbus in Part II., he rises quite to the Prize Poem altitude:

> "Columbus' eye, in transport of amaze,
> The spacious region of delight surveys,
> Charming with real scenes the raptur'd view,
> Fairer than all his warmest wishes drew;
> Isles in fair spring's eternal livery dight,
> The vast Savannah's space, the mountain's height;
> Forests of growth gigantic, that display'd
> O'er spacious continents impervious shade;

* This reminds us that at the installation of Lord North, at Oxford, in 1772, the degree of D.C.L. was conferred on Pye among others. He had assuredly as much right to it as some gentlemen lately so honoured.

Fields that uncultur'd, harvests rich produce,
Spontaneous fruits that yield ambrosial juice;
And rivers that their sea-broad currents roll'd
Through groves of perfume, and o'er sands of gold."

Two years after his succession to the Laurel, he was made one of the Magistrates of Westminster. He industriously devoted himself to his judicial studies, although there is an anecdote in the autobiography of Mr. Leigh Hunt to the effect that Pye was one day found absorbed in his books when an impatient Court was awaiting his arrival on the bench at Westminster.

He published in 1827 "A Summary of the Duties of a Justice of the Peace."

As we do not belong to that class of writers who, according to Mason, in his "Memoirs of W. Whitehead," "gain what they think an honest livelihood by publishing the lives of the living," so also we do not attempt to chronicle any of the minute circumstances of the private life of our Laureate.

He died at Pinner, in Herts, in a house which he had purchased there, on August 13th, 1813.

Though after his appointment to the Laureateship, his works became a target for wit and sarcasm, though his name was facetiously punned on in squibs political and literary, and "Pye et Parvus Pybus"* was in every one's mouth, yet he enjoyed a good literary, if not a high poetical reputation.

We find that in 1807 he was called upon to write an address for the Anniversary of the Literary Fund Dinner. He was the friend of Mitford, Hayley, and other men of note.

His works are very voluminous, and form a goodly list,

* Charles Small Pybus, M.P., and in the House at the time that Pye was. He is the author of a poem called "The Sovereign," chiefly remarkable for the gorgeous style in which it was printed.

catalogued precisely in Watt's "Bibliotheca Britannica." They are many of them to be found in the British Museum, in libraries at country houses, and to be picked up at book-stalls. Notwithstanding the elaborate jocosity which we have before quoted at the expense of his version of "Tyrtæus," some of the translations are very spirited. There are smooth and pretty verses in his "Hymns and Epigrams of Homer." His "Carmen Seculare" is musical and rhetorical verse, occasionally bombastic, and the preface to it contains a discussion like the one which appeared in the newspaper three years ago, whether January 1st, 1800, or January 1st, 1801, is the first day of the nineteenth century.

Besides Pye's poetical productions, he wrote more than once for the stage, translated a work from the German, and published a translation of the "Poetics of Aristotle," with a commentary. It is a curious and not uninteresting book, full of gossipping anecdote and colloquial criticism. It occasionally degenerates into feeble garrulity, as, for instance, his defence of the ladies against Aristotle's definition, and Twining's comment upon it. As a critic, he is usually candid, but not severe. He speaks of one of Warton's odes as "one of the most beautiful and original descriptive poems in our language." Of two of his earlier predecessors he says in terms less eulogistic, "Cibber possessed a genius not above mediocrity, and Tate was an indifferent poet." Pye had a very warm admiration for Thompson, and wrote a "Sonnet on a Villa at Rosedale, Richmond," once the property of that poet. His "Comments on the Commentations of Shakespeare," is a readable little book, full of short notes on the various plays. He treats the Commentators somewhat uncivilly, and is especially bilious against Warburton. The work called forth a letter in the "Gentleman's Magazine," in which the writer complains

loudly of the flippancy of Mr. Pye. In commenting on the line in the "Merchant of Venice,"

"The man that hath no music in himself,"

he makes a confession of his own want of taste for instrumental music: "But I confess I, who would almost as soon stand up to my neck in water in winter as sit out a concert, should have no great opinion of that man who was dead to the effect of a pathetic song set to a simple melody."

Pye does not, from occasional remarks which occur in his writings, seem to have set great store on his poetical productions. In a dedicatory letter to Mr. Addington, prefixed to his "Epic of Alfred," he quotes from the preface to Prior's "Solomon" the following remark, and applies it to himself. "I am glad to have it observed, that there appears throughout my verses a zeal for the honour of my country; and I had rather be thought a good Englishman than the best poet or the greatest scholar that ever wrote." And so he was, a good Englishman, a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, a man of ancient family, of patriotic principles, of genial courtesy, and pleasant convivial habits,* an industrious student, a well-informed, cultivated, graceful writer; but a poet, he assuredly was not. Weighed in the balance of contemporaneous criticism, he was found wanting, and Time has sanctioned the severe decree.

* Notwithstanding his conviviality, it was during his Laureateship that the tierce of Canary was discontinued, and the £27 substituted.

## ROBERT SOUTHEY.

WHAT heart does not warm to the memory of Robert Southey, pattern of the literary character in this wearing nineteenth century? Penniless, disowned by his friends, with no one to look up to for assistance, nothing could divert him from his cherished inclination. He lived for literature. Its pursuit constituted his happiness. For it he sacrificed proffered rank and power; and joyfully he devoted to its service a toiling life of unexampled industry. Yet this man so wedded to his absorbing vocation, in the social capacity of husband, father, relative and friend, stands above reproach. His life is one emphatic denial of the daring falsehood, that genius and virtue are incompatible, that domestic felicity is inconsistent with literary labour. England knew not a happier circle, than that which for years assembled by the humble hearthstone at Greta Hall. It is refreshing to turn aside from the babble of the world, and contemplate that peaceful home, nestling amid the Cumberland mountains.

Our hero first saw the light on the 12th August, 1774,

at Bristol, in which city his father was residing, engaged in trade. His ancestors, who were yeomen of Somersetshire, were settled about eighty years anterior to that period near Wellington in that county. As they bore arms, and the arms had a religious character, he was pleased to imagine they were of gentle blood; and that far back in crusading times, a Southey had couched a lance against the infidel in Palestine.

The sensibilities of the child were early awakened, and when he was three years old, the recital of the fine old ballad of "Chevy Chase" would bring tears into his eyes. Until his sixth year, he was placed at a school superintended by an antique dame of awful aspect, and the youthful dreamer there planned a scheme, to go with two of his school-fellows and live by themselves in freedom on some desert island. Some martial predilections that manifested themselves about this time, in jarring contrast with his more peaceful longings were speedily whipped out of him.

His holydays he occasionally spent with Miss Tyler, a maiden aunt, a half-sister of his mother, who had a house in one of the suburbs of Bath, and the life he led there must have clashed rudely with the gentle enthusiasm of his nature. This lady was a singular character, careless, or unable to understand the disposition of the bright-eyed boy she sheltered beneath her roof. She held the notion that a commanding mind was invariably associated with a violent temper, and indulged her own accordingly. Though scrupulously clean, she would go about in rags, lived in the worst kitchen, and was parsimonious of everything but money. A severe cleanliness was her exaggerated virtue, and her abhorrence of dust amounted to a disease. She would send out the tea-kettle to be emptied and refilled, if any one chanced to walk past the fire-place while it was sim-

mering upon the hob; a cup would be buried for weeks if it had come in contact with the unclean lip of a stranger, and so sacred in her eyes was her cherry wood arm-chair, that "if any visitor who was not in her especial favour sat thereon, the leathern cushion was always sent into the garden to be aired and purified before she would use it again." The grounds about the house abounded with fruit trees, and the fragrant jessamine clustered over the steps that led from the parlour to the garden. This was a favourite spot with young Southey, where he would often sit for hours, indulging in the vague and strange reveries of childhood. The house was tastefully filled with antique furniture, a few prints adorned the walls, and a curtain guarded from flies and profanation, Gainsborough's portrait of its eccentric mistress. Here wearily passed the days of the child-poet; he was allowed no playmates; he experienced no sympathy; he was debarred from the exercises natural to his age, as no speck of dirt was ever allowed to soil his immaculate attire. He slept with his aunt, who was a late riser, and morning after morning had he to lie in painful tranquillity, fearing lest he might disturb her by some involuntary motion; occupied in tracing fanciful combinations in the folds of the curtains, and watching the countless motes dancing in the sunbeams that crept through the chinks of the shutters.

The wife of Francis Newberry, a son of Goldsmith's publishing patron, was a friend of Miss Tyler's, and she presented the nephew with twenty of those famous juvenile works, so popular, before it was the custom to torture the minds of children with elementary treatises on statics and political economy. To the eager perusal of these treasures Southey ascribed much of his early predilection for books. He was frequently taken to the theatre, for which amusement Miss Tyler had a strong partiality, and would con-

verse with the actors who visited her house. He even caught the dramatic tone of conversation, and one Sunday on his return from church received a grave rebuke, for having observed that there had been a very full house that morning.

In his sixth year he was sent to a school at Bristol, kept by one Foot, a Baptist, who had sunk into Arianism, a vindictive and stern divine, who died after he had been there twelve months, and was succeeded by a Socinian. He was then removed to Corston, about nine miles from Bristol; this school was abruptly dissolved, and young Southey was sent to live with his grandmother at Bedminster, with whom Miss Tyler was then domesticated.

He was next placed under a Welshman named Williams, at Bristol, from whom he learnt but little, but where he spent the pleasantest of his school days. Williams, who was proud of his elocution, once asked his pupil scornfully who taught him to read. "My aunt," replied Southey. "Then give my compliments to your aunt," said the master, "and tell her that my old horse that has been dead twenty years could have taught you as well." Southey innocently delivered the message verbatim, and was astonished at the violent reception it met with. He was next placed under the superintendence of Lewis, a clergyman at Bristol, where Miss Tyler was then residing. This succession of teachers must, according to conventional notions of education, have been most injurious. An ordinary boy would have been as ignorant at the end of such a peregrination as at the beginning. But it was advantageous rather than hurtful to an inquisitive mind like Southey's. The frequent change of scene enlarged his ideas, and he had already commenced that system of unconscious self-culture, which is the principal, probably the only, effective education of superior minds. Newberry's

publications had awakened a taste for reading, which he gratified by all available means. Beaumont and Fletcher were read through before he was eight years old; he had also made himself familiar with some of the plays of Shakespeare, and the discrepancy between them, and the history of the times they treated of, was a grievous puzzle to him.

During one of his holidays, a friend made him a present of Hoole's translation of "Tasso." The book touched a nerve in his organization that had till then been dormant, and the remembrance of the gratification its pages afforded, endured through all his after life. The book was carefully preserved. "Forty years," said he, writing in 1823, "have tarnished the gilding upon its back, but they have not effaced my remembrance of the joy with which I received it, and the delight I found in its perusal." Tasso, Ariosto, Spenser, Mickle's "Lusiad," Pope's "Homer," Josephus, Sidney's "Arcadia," and Rowley were diligently read. His father's library was limited, a small cupboard held all his books and his wine-glasses; but during the holidays, the boy had the run of a circulating library in the town comprising a few hundred volumes, and among them he revelled.

He had projected and commenced both tragedies and epic poems, before he was ten years of age, and was surprised that his schoolfellows should experience any difficulty in providing appropriate dialogue if he furnished the plot and characters. "It is the easiest thing in the world," said he, "to write a play, for you know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the place of the characters, and to make them say it." He was sensitive, however, of his fame, and some of his pieces having been discovered and read at his aunt's, he invented a cypher; but becoming unable to solve his own hieroglyphics, burnt his manuscripts in vexation.

In February, 1788, he went to Westminster, but not

having been previously drilled in Latin verse-making, he never distinguished himself at the school. While there, a paper was started called "The Flagellant." In consequence of an attack on corporal punishment, in the ninth number, furnished by Southey, written in a strain of jocularity rather than invective, Dr. Vincent, the head master, commenced an action for libel against the publisher, and dismissed its contributor from the school; a hard punishment, it seems, for so trivial a delinquency, and unwise to give such consideration to the foolish productions of boys. The circumstance reminds us of a similar event, of recent occurrence, which was treated with much more temper and judgment. In a metropolitan educational establishment, some youthful reformers undertook to criticise the doings of their masters. A periodical was started, bearing a formidable title, which was to make the oppressors pale with fear. The Principal, without manifesting the slightest perturbation, summoned the ferocious editor, thanked him for his flattering allusion to himself, and mildly strangled "The Autocrat," at its birth.

The fame of "The Flagellant," preceded the discomfited writer to Oxford, and on his presenting himself at Christ Church, the Dean, Cyril Jackson, most unreasonably declined to receive him. Long years afterwards, the University, amid unbounded acclamations, conferred its highest honours on the man she once could treat thus harshly. When will it be discovered that the justest and the soundest policy for that body to pursue, is to throw open their college doors as widely as possible? If full permission to grant or refuse admittance to a great public institution be unreservedly entrusted to an individual, common justice requires that such a functionary should preserve himself pure from all prejudicial bias, and hold his important privilege, not as a private *appanage*, but as a trust, solely for the public good.

Southey was however admitted at Balliol College, and went into residence in January, 1793. The principal event that marked his college career was his acquaintance with Coleridge. That singular compound of grandeur and littleness was an undergraduate at Jesus College, Cambridge. In June, 1794, he visited Oxford, was introduced to Southey, with whom a common sympathy in tastes and opinions begat an intimacy which speedily ripened into friendship.

Those were days of excitement, nay, of frenzy. The French Revolution had burst upon Europe; political trials tore in pieces the usual equanimity of English society, and the writings of Burke were the theme of universal laudation or invective. Coleridge talked, debated, speculated, with all the ardour of his imaginative and capacious intellect; while the writings of Godwin and Rousseau had excited in Southey's mind the most distorted views of the capabilities and ends of civil society. Then did these two dreamers converse gravely of Pantisocracy. The distracted world was to be edified by the visible realization of a scheme, more ideal and perfect than had ever amused the fancy or beguiled the tedium of poet or philosopher. On the banks of the Susquehannah a community should arise, in which patriarchal innocence and European refinement were to harmonize in blending beauty. Laws would be superfluous; selfishness proscribed; contention, discord, and crime become unknown words. Their territory, the purchase of their joint contributions, should be tilled by their common labour. The wives of the party were to perform all the necessary domestic offices, and no unsympathizing bachelor was to profane by his presence that select elysium. Lovell, a quaker-poet, and another Oxford man, named Burnett, embraced their views; and their number eventually swelled to twenty-five. Gradually, however, the enthusiasm was neutralized, by the very

cause that had contributed to its creation. The two poets were at Bristol, the place chosen as their port of embarkation. Cottle, the publisher, who had formed their acquaintance, and looked up to them with affectionate pride, made himself wretched by harping upon the day that was to bear them beyond the broad Atlantic. A laconic epistle from Coleridge opened his eyes and dispelled his fears. It consisted of a single sentence, but the commencement was pointedly significant. "My dear Sir," wrote the reformer, "can you conveniently lend me five pounds? as we want a little more than four pounds to make up our lodging bill." Cottle sent off the money with tears of joy. Oh ye publishers! has ever your craft produced his fellow?

He had been invited to join their society, but had modestly excused himself on the plea of unworthiness. He introduced, however, his new friends to several persons in the neighbourhood, and they repaid him to the best of their ability. "Each of them," says he, "read me his productions, each accepted my invitations;" and we learn without surprise that these regenerators of the human race thought Bristol a "very pleasant residence."

Various schemes were devised to provide for current expenses; they proposed a magazine, but such a work was not to be "undertaken without a certainty of indemnification," and such a certainty could not be ensured, notwithstanding Southey's confidence of being able "to make it the best thing of the kind ever published." They obtained a small, though timely supply, by delivering each a course of lectures, Southey on History, and Coleridge on Politics; while Cottle offered them thirty guineas each for their poems, Coleridge having in vain attempted to find a publisher for his in London. Meanwhile the emigration movement stood still. Southey, who was the first to awake to a perception of its absurdity, pro-

posed a preliminary trial in Wales, to which Coleridge instinctively objected; and when at last the head of the Pantisocratists announced to their philosophic defender the fatal tidings of his secession from the "aspheterising" society, the indignation of the thwarted colonizer shook for a while the equanimity of the friend.

Southey's "Joan of Arc," written in 1793, had been announced for publication by subscription, but subscribers were slow to come forward. He happened to read a portion of it to Cottle, who, with characteristic generosity, immediately offered him fifty guineas for the copyright, together with fifty copies for his subscribers. Southey was too rejoiced to hesitate, and set himself diligently to work, correcting and recomposing. He studied as models, the Bible, Homer, and Ossian, and, with an unexpected bathos, we are told, that his style was "much ameliorated by Bowles." During the fervour of the scheme of Pantisocracy, he had fallen in love with Miss Fricker, one of whose sisters was the wife of Lovell, and another, Coleridge shortly afterwards married. The design of the emigration and the intended marriage had been entrusted to his mother, who was to have accompanied the colonists; but the cautious enthusiast had been most careful to prevent any rumour of these grave matters reaching the ears of Miss Tyler. But great revolutions in society will indicate their approach. Officious gossip whispered the astounding intelligence, and the storm burst upon his poor head with a fury as violent as it was sudden. He was turned out of doors, penniless, on a stormy night (Friday, Oct. 18th, 1794), and, after having walked from Bath that morning, had to retrace his journey on foot, through wind and pelting rain; and the aunt and nephew were never afterwards reconciled.

He had quitted Oxford, partly because his religious views would have been a bar to his entrance into the Church,

partly through the failure of his father's resources; and he now found himself thrown upon the world without any visible means of support, his relatives offended, and a dowerless maiden about to become his bride. "I could not enter the Church," he afterwards wrote, "nor had I finances to study physic; I have not the gift of making shoes, nor the happy art of mending them; education has unfitted me for trade, and I must perforce enter the muster-roll of authors." But the alternative pleased him. A secret gratification accompanied his perplexities. Why should he fret, if opposing circumstances pushed him from the ordinary track? They but afforded him a pretext to tread that thorny ascent he was inwardly resolved to attempt. As he paced the streets wearied, desolate, not knowing where to obtain the morrow's meal, he felt little concern on that account; he was busied on better things, shaping high themes of tragic dignity, and giving a language to the craving thoughts that crowded his fertile imagination.

His uncle, Mr. Hill, who held a chaplaincy at Lisbon, to wean him from his imprudent attachment, and to withdraw him from the influence of his theorizing friends, proposed that he should accompany him on his return to Portugal. But the love for his fair Edith was of that equable but ardent nature, which can see no obstacles to its consummation. When it was settled that he should leave England, he fixed a day for his marriage. The ceremony was performed within the fine old pile of Redcliffe Church (Nov. 14th, 1795), and he then immediately prepared for his voyage. "My Edith persuades me to go, and then weeps that I am going;" and sadly his maiden-wife watched his departure, with her wedding-ring hanging round her neck. The affection thus strangely testified, deepened with advancing years, and knew no cold vicissitude till made holy by the touch of death.

His residence abroad, which lasted from November 1795 to May 1796, gave rise to his "Letters from Spain and Portugal," and on his return he commenced writing for "The Monthly Magazine" and other periodicals. "I am continually writing or reading," he observes, in a letter to a friend; "if industry can do anything for any man, it shall for me. My plan is to study from five in the morning till eight, from nine till twelve, and from one till four. The evenings are my own." Meantime he projected Epics, Tragedies, Histories, Romances; nothing was too arduous for his bold ambition.

To ensure a competence, however, he proposed to undertake the study of the law, though without any serious intention of devoting himself to the profession. When a sufficiency had been gained, he would retire to the country, and his first Christmas fire should be made of his calf-bound volumes. "Oh, Grosvenor," he writes, "what a blessed bonfire!" No wonder the study baffled him. That rugged mistress must be perseveringly wooed, and for her own sake alone, otherwise the brightest minds will fail where every day we see plodding mediocrity excel.

He looked forward to a residence in London with a shrinking dread; and it was with undisguised dissatisfaction he went up and entered himself at Gray's Inn. (Feb. 7th, 1797). His old schoolfellow at Westminster, Mr. C. W. W. Wynn, with rare and honourable generosity, offered him an annuity of £160 per annum, which he frankly accepted.

In the spring, thinking his law studies could be pursued as successfully in the country as in London, he took lodgings at Burton, in Hampshire. Here he soon found himself to his heart's delight, the centre of a family group. His mother joined him, and his brother Thomas, a midshipman just released from prison at Brest. Charles

Lloyd, afterwards classed with the Lake School, and Cottle, paid him a visit; and here commenced his lasting friendship with Rickman, one of the guests at Lamb's Wednesday evening suppers. He next removed to Bath, and at the end of the year returned to London. He wrote for "The Critical Review," prepared a second edition of "Joan of Arc," and still talked of reading law; but he fancied London disagreed with him, and removed to Bristol. Burnet, the quondam Pantisocratist, had become a Unitarian minister at Norwich. Southey had placed his younger brother Henry with him as a private pupil, and seized the excuse to visit that city, where he became acquainted with the celebrated William Taylor.

On his return, he took a small house at Westbury, near Bristol, and in March, 1799, went up to London to keep his term. The day after his arrival he wrote to his wife, telling her he was already home-sick, and planning how he might soonest do his work and get back. The old book-stalls afforded him his only amusement, and his delight was great on exhuming several scarce and ponderous epics in French and Italian—lured to them, it would seem, by some mysterious sympathy—and the perusal of which was to constitute the ravishing employment of his evenings at home. "I have had self-denial enough," he writes, "(admire me Edith!) to abstain from these books till my return."

It became daily more evident that he was to look to his pen for subsistence, but the prospect to an ordinary mind would have been sufficiently discouraging. With all his prodigious toil, he had made little impression on the public. His rejection of rhyme, and the novel form in which he cast his poems, offended the ear of a generation tuned to a more regular rhythm; while his political views affected their sale, as in those heated times men refused, or were unable, to discriminate the poet from the partizan.

Nevertheless, he was steadily acquiring a reputation among the publishers, and could calculate on constant and tolerably remunerative employment. His years now numbered five-and-twenty. He had passed through a difficult youth, but his conduct had been uniformly pure. He had never stooped to the easy palliation of misfortune or impulsive temperament as an excuse for youthful depravity, and in the darkest season had resolutely borne up against despondency. Once only, he had allowed the yearning of affection to stifle prudential warnings; unless, indeed, such an abandonment of self be not in the end man's highest prudence. Experience had chastened his romantic aspirations. His views were becoming more sober and more enlarged. And so, with cheerful brow, he faced the future. The past gave him no cause for regret, and, with his Edith by his side, he could look forward with hope, and love would consecrate toil.

"Madoc" had been commenced before "Joan of Arc" was planned; he now resumed it, and before long, "Thalaba," too, was on the anvil, as with his astonishing facility, one epic was scarcely completed before he was midway in another. His health sank under such continuous labour, and a change of air was imperatively urged by his friends. He was expecting to raise the necessary funds for a trip to Germany by the sale of his "Thalaba," when a strong desire came over him to pay a second visit to Portugal.

In April, 1800, after waiting several days for a fair wind, he embarked at Falmouth, with Mrs. Southey, in the Lisbon packet. The weather was fine, but both the travellers suffered severely from sea-sickness. One morning, to add to their disquietude, a cutter with English colours, but evidently French, was seen bearing down upon them. They signalled; no notice was taken. A gun was fired and immediately answered; an action

seemed inevitable. They mounted ten guns, their companion packet seven; but the cutter was more than a match for both. All were in a bustle of preparation; Mrs. Southey, pale and trembling, was conveyed to the cockpit, and Southey, musket in hand, took his station on the quarter-deck. The cutter swept between the two vessels with contemptuous calmness. She was so near, that the smoke from her matches was clearly discernible. They hailed her, and were replied to in broken English, and the object of dread passed on. She was veritably English, though manned chiefly by Guernsey men. Southey felt an "honest joy" at this satisfactory conclusion. "I laid the musket in the chest," says he, "with considerably more pleasure than I took it out."

He remained at Lisbon a month or two, renewing old associations, and in July took up his abode at Cintra. Here he busied himself in collecting materials for his "History of Portugal," the work that was to hand down his name to posterity, almost the first and the last day dream of his life. He devoted himself likewise to the assiduous study of Portuguese literature, nothing daunted by its comparatively unimportant character. "It is not worth much," says he, "but it is not from the rose and the violet only that the bee sucks honey."

He missed at first the companionship and conversation of his friends. "Here I lack society," he wrote, "and were it not for a self-sufficiency (like the bear who sucks his paws when the snow shuts him up in his den) should be in a state of famine;" but this want kept him with the greater steadiness at his studies. He formed also an attachment for the neighbourhood of Cintra, and contemplated a return to England with evident reluctance. His health materially improved, and the glowing scenery of his temporary home grew familiar to his imagination.

The river with its mountain boundary, the winter sun, and the summer paradise of myrtle and orange trees entranced him with their ever-increasing attractions. "I would gladly live and die here," he exclaimed; but his literary plans operated to counteract any such inclinations, and he became anxious with the help of English libraries to digest and arrange the profuse materials he had been so diligently collecting. Coleridge had taken up his abode at Keswick, and his thoughts turned to a home near his friend. The distance, however, from Bristol and London, the two foci of his publishing interests weighed with him against such a decision, and he turned a wistful eye to Allfoxen in Somersetshire, where Wordsworth had resided. In June (1801) he returned to England and proceeded direct to Bristol. His friends were gratified by his altered appearance; his health was re-established, and the nervous symptoms induced by a sedentary life and excessive task-work of the brain, had been dispelled by change of climate, and the vicissitudes of travel.

Coleridge invited him to Greta Hall, and sent him the following description of the place which, after his many and uncertain wanderings; eventually became his fixed and permanent home. "Our house stands on a low hill, the whole front of which is one field, and an enormous garden, nine-tenths of which is a nursery garden. Behind the house is an orchard, and a small wood on a steep slope, at the foot of which flows the river Greta, which winds round and catches the evening lights in the front of the house. In front we have a giant's camp—an encamped army of tent-like mountains, which by an inverted arch gives a view of another vale. On our right the lovely vale and the wedge-shaped Lake of Bassenthwaite, and on our left Derwentwater and Lodore full in view, and the fantastic mountains of Borrodaile. Behind us is the

massy Skiddaw, smooth, green, high with two chasms, and a tent-like ridge in the larger. A fairer scene you have not seen in all your wanderings."

The benefit Southey had derived from his residence in Portugal induced him to hope for some foreign appointment, which would enable him to fix his abode in a warmer latitude. He had some prospect of obtaining a secretaryship to the embassy at Constantinople, and contemplated a tour in the East with great satisfaction. He was at a little trouble in raising the necessary funds for his travelling expedition to the Lakes, where he arrived in the course of the summer. The scenery disappointed him at first; his memory still dwelling on the broader waters, and the loftier mountains, and the purer and brighter sunshine of a southern landscape; but more familiar acquaintance converted disappointment into admiration and love. The gorgeous splendour of other lands may appeal to the imagination, and captivate the eye; but the gentler loveliness of English scenery, like that of our English women, speaks imperceptibly to the heart, and fascinates affection.

In the autumn of the year, he paid a visit to his friend Mr. Wynn at his seat Llangedwin, in North Wales, where on his arrival he found a letter awaiting him, offering him the appointment of secretary to Mr. Corry, the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland with a salary of £350 a-year. He accepted the post, and as his services were required at once, hastened back to Keswick to make the necessary preparations for his journey. At Dublin he was presented with a visible argument in favour of the Union, by some glaring specimens of the inveterate peculation that had flourished under the native government. The duties of his office required him after a very short stay there to proceed to London, and he expresses an unusual soreness at his altered position with regard to the world, or rather a

certain section of that multiform concretion: "As if," says he, "the author of 'Joan of Arc,' and 'Thalaba,' was made a great man by scribing for the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer." No one ever had a greater and more becoming sense of the dignity of the literary calling than Southey, and his pure and upright dealing throughout contributed to vindicate his lofty notion. The world thought him elevated in the social scale by the acceptance of this paltry appointment. Southey rather looked upon it as a degradation, for it suspended higher labours.

In the beginning of 1802, his mother, who was residing with him at London, died, and the loss was severely felt by one of his acute sensibilities. As the duties of his office were chiefly nominal, Mr. Corry proposed that he should comprise among them the tuition of his son to fill up the vacant time. To this Southey properly objected, and urged by conscientious motives, resigned "a foolish office and a good salary," and retired to Bristol. "I have a job in hand for Longman and Rees which will bring in £60, a possibility of £40, and a chance of a further £30." For such cheering prospects he threw up a comfortable sinecure.

His own straits only made him more sympathizing with the necessities of others. He undertook, in conjunction with Cottle, an edition of Chatterton's Works, for the benefit of the poet's sister, Mrs. Newton and her daughter, who were in extremely reduced circumstances, and felt as happy in handing over to her £300, the proceeds of his industry, as the poor woman could have felt in receiving it.

In September, 1802, his first child was born, and he became anxious to settle for life. He thought of Richmond, Keswick, Wales, and entered into a treaty for Maes Gwyn, a house in the Vale of Neath, which, on some misunderstanding with the landlord, was broken off. His

thoughts still occasionally reverted to the South. Writing to his brother in May, he says: "This war terrifies and puzzles me about Portugal. I think of going over alone this next winter while I can. I have fifteen quartos on the way from Lisbon, and—zounds! if they should be taken!"

In June, 1803, he made a short trip to London to consult with Messrs. Longman and Rees respecting their projected "Bibliotheca Britannica," and he meditated settling at Richmond, and devoting himself entirely to this extensive and laborious work. But his first-born child—the infant girl of whom he had been so "foolishly fond"—was taken from him, and the bereaved parents turned their steps to Keswick, for the consolations of friendship in the society of Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge.

The excited state of public affairs deeply affected the interests of literature, and the publishers deemed it prudent to defer the appearance of their weighty undertaking. Meanwhile, two extracts from letters written during the following year, will afford some glimpse of our author's occupations.

In March, writing to Rickman, he says: "I have more in hand than Bonaparte or Marquis Wellesley—digesting Gothic law, gleaning moral history from monkish legends, and conquering India, or rather Asia with Albuquerque, filling up the chinks of the day by hunting in Jesuit chronicles, and compiling 'Collectanea Hispanica and Gothica.' Meantime, 'Madoc' sleeps, and my lucre of gain compilation ('Specimens of the English Poets') goes on at night, when I am fairly obliged to lay history aside, because it perplexes me in my dreams."

In September of the same year, he thus writes to his brother:

"Meantime, these are my employments—to finish the correcting and printing of 'Madoc,' to get through my

annual work of reviewing, and bring my history as far forward as possible. In the press, I have: 1. 'Metrical Tales and other Poems;' 2. 'Specimens of the later English Poets,' *i. e.*, of all who have died from 1685 to 1800; 3. 'Madoc,' in quarto, whereof twenty-two sheets are printed. I am learning Dutch. My reason for attaining the language is, that as the Dutch conquered, or rather destroyed, the Portuguese empire in Asia, the history of the downfall of that empire is, of course, more fully related by Dutch than by Portuguese historians. I have so far altered my original plan of the history as to resolve upon not introducing the life of St. Francisco and the Church therewith connected, but to reserve them for a separate history of Monachism, which will make a very entertaining and amusing work. A good honest quarto may comprise it. My whole historical labours will then consist of three separate works: 1. 'History of Portugal': the European part, 3 vols.; 2. 'History of the Portuguese Empire in Asia,' 2 or 3 vols.; 3. 'History of Brazil;' 4. 'History of the Jesuits in Japan;' 5. 'Literary History of Spain and Portugal,' 2 vols.; 6. 'History of Monachism.' In all, ten, eleven, or twelve quarto volumes; and you can easily imagine with what pleasure I look at all the labour before me." Happy Southey!

Gradually, he became stationary at Keswick, fixed there by his ever-accumulating library, which so increased that it became impossible to move it about with him. His life, henceforth, presents few incidents that affected his character or career, flowing on in an even tenor to the last, reading and writing his sole occupation. His health was preserved by frequent excursions to the neighbouring counties, to London and to the continent, and generally with a party of friends. These trips formed his only relaxation, but his leisure was as laborious as other men's toil. He kept minute accounts of everything that fell

under his observation, ransacked book-stalls, dived into libraries, while huge packages of books, straggling after him at uncertain intervals, invariably followed his return home.

In the previous summer, he had paid a visit to London, where he dined with Sotheby, the amiable translator of "Oberon," and met several of the more distinguished literati; and this year (1805), he accompanied his friend, the Rev. Peter Elmsley (afterwards Principal of St. Alban's Hall, Oxford), to Scotland, visited Sir Walter Scott at Ashestiel, and went over the ground to which that poet had imparted a renewed interest by his recent poem, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

His manner of life when at home, which afterwards experienced little variation, is thus detailed in a letter to a friend: "My actions are as regular as St. Dunstan's quarter-boys. Three pages of history after breakfast (equivalent to five in small quarto printing); then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies, or what else suits my humour, till dinner-time; from dinner to tea I read, write letters, see the newspapers, and very often indulge in a siesta. After tea I go to poetry, and correct, and re-write, and copy till I am tired, and then turn to anything else till supper. And this is my life, which if it be not a very merry one, is yet as happy as heart could wish."

Though thus occupied, he still found time to assist oppressed and struggling talent; and the young and inexperienced always found in him a candid and faithful monitor, a generous and sympathizing friend. When the poems of Kirke White were so unjustifiably assailed in "The Monthly Review," the letter the broken-hearted poet wrote to the reviewers met Southey's eye. His indignation burned at the unfeeling attack. He wrote to White, offering any aid he could afford, mentioned him

in London, and obtained assurances of assistance from Sotheby, Lord Carysfort, and others. Two short years laid the ardent student in his grave, a victim to College honours. "Were I to paint a picture of Fame," were his words to a friend shortly before his death, "crowning a distinguished undergraduate after a senate-house examination, I would represent her as concealing a death's head under a mask of beauty." He spoke with a presentiment of his approaching doom. Southey mourned his fate, edited his remains, wrote the tragic story of his life, and assisted his surviving brothers, who ever remained his grateful friends and correspondents.

Ebenezer Elliott acquired much of his after power and perspicuity, through following the judicious advice that Southey at various times administered, on receiving copies of his first crude and imperfect compositions. But the detail would be endless were we to go through the list of all the aspiring candidates for fame, who wrote to Southey for advice, and teased him to correct or read their effusions. Two only we select, as being instances of unusual promise untimely cut off in the unfruitful blossom.

James Dusautoy was the son of a retired officer living in Devonshire. He was one of a numerous family; their means were narrow, and he was ambitious of working his way through literature to the bar. He forwarded some of his compositions to Southey, asking his advice as to the advisability of publishing them. He was then but seventeen, and a boy's verses would not be likely to attract much notice, competing with the giant reputations of that prolific era. "Abstain from publication," was the reply, "read and write. Shoot at a high mark, and you will gain strength of arm. Precision of aim will come at its proper season." Southey interested himself to obtain his admission at Emanuel College, Cambridge, where he greatly distinguished himself in the College examinations;

stood first of his year in classics, and fourth in mathematics. A fever that broke out in the town carried him off in the full flush of success, with the highest University honours almost in his grasp. He had been a competitor for the English poetical prize in 1814, when Dr. Whewell was announced as the successful candidate.

Herbert Knowles was of humble origin. Alone in the world, without father or mother; his abilities excited the attention of strangers, and they offered to subscribe a portion of the necessary expenses of his education, if his friends could raise the rest. He was sent to a school in Yorkshire, on leaving which, his friends found themselves unable to afford him further assistance. Anxious to do something for himself, he wrote a poem, "brimful of power and of promise," and sent it to Southey, asking permission to dedicate it to him. Southey made inquiries respecting him, found that his conduct was exemplary, subscribed himself, and obtained other subscriptions to make up the requisite sum for his support at Cambridge. The overjoyed youth wrote a letter to his benefactor, remarkable for the sense of gratitude it manifests throughout, but more remarkable still for its good sense. The melancholy case of Kirke White was before his eyes. He was apprehensive his physical strength might prove insufficient to support him under the exhausting efforts necessary for University distinction. "Could he twine a laurel with the cypress, he would not repine, but to relinquish every hope of future excellence, and future usefulness in one wild and unavailing pursuit, were indeed a madman's act, and worthy of a madman's fate." What he could do he would, and thus he set to work, and after the lapse of two brief months sank in the race, with all his aspirations.

Southey, notwithstanding his diligence, had been unable to extricate himself from the annoyances of hampered

means; as the profits of his writings were insufficient to defray the expenses of his moderate household. In 1807, the Grenville ministry during their short tenure of power, through the influence of Mr. Wynn, one of its members, conferred on him a pension of £200 a-year. But fees and taxes reduced the amount to £144, so that his actual income was diminished by the grant, as he refused all further acceptance of the annuity Mr. Wynn had so generously allowed him. A new source of emolument was, however, soon opened up to his indefatigable pen, to which, though it interfered with the progress of what he deemed his more important works, we owe some of his most popular productions.

At the commencement of the present century, a clique of writers professing extreme liberal opinions, with characteristic intolerance attempted to establish a dictatorship in literature and politics. In their organ, "The Edinburgh Review," Southey's writings had been assailed with unsparing virulence; but on the occasion of some altercation between the editor and the publishers, the latter made overtures to Southey requesting some articles from his pen. In November, 1807, Sir Walter Scott likewise, who was a casual contributor to that journal, wrote to him, urging him to bring his talents to so lucrative a mart; and by way of palliation for the flippancy of the criticisms of "Madoc" and "Thalaba," stated, that Jeffrey had expressed the highest opinion of his character and talents. In his previous visit to Scotland, Southey had met some of these gentlemen, and personal intercourse had not led him to form any very exalted notion of their acquirements or capacity.

"The Edinburgh Reviewers I like well as companions," he wrote, "and think little of as anything else. Elmsley has more knowledge and a sounder mind than any or all of them. Living in habits of intimate intercourse with such

men as Rickman, William Taylor, Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Scotch did certainly appear to me very pigmies—literatuli." Friendship might have slightly swayed his judgment; but there is no doubt, the great influence these writers possessed at that time, was owing more to the skill with which they directed their talent, than the talent itself. With minds highly cultivated and well disciplined, they were deficient in originality; clever in mastering the details of a subject, but at fault if higher faculties were needed; able men, indeed, but not the master spirits that they told the world they were.

Southey, in forwarding his objections to any alliance of the kind proposed, thus strongly reprobated the violent personalities that disgraced the conduct of that journal. "On subjects of moral or political importance, no man is more apt to speak in the very gall of bitterness than I am, and this habit is likely to go with me to the grave; but that sort of bitterness, in which he (Jeffrey) indulges, which tends directly to wound a man in his feelings, and injure him in his fame and fortune, appears to me utterly inexcusable. Now, though there would be no necessity that I should follow this example, yet every separate article in the 'Review' derives authority from the merit of all the others; and in this way, whatever of any merit I might insert there, would aid and abet opinions hostile to my own, and thus identify me with a system which I thoroughly disapprove. This is not said hastily. The emolument to be derived from writing at 10 guineas a sheet, Scotch measure, instead of £7, would be considerable; the pecuniary advantage, resulting from the different manner in which my future works would be handled, probably still more so. But my moral feelings must not be compromised." And in the following year, he expressed great pleasure on hearing that Sir Walter Scott had withdrawn his assistance from the periodical.

In "The Quarterly Review," established shortly afterwards, Southey found a more congenial field of employment. For a long series of years, he wrote regularly for its pages, and contributed more than any other individual writer to its permanent popularity and success. Nevertheless, his equanimity had to submit to the most vexatious trials. Gifford applied the editorial knife with slashing and imperturbable severity, and the spectacle of his mutilated phrases and opinions, touched him to the quick. He expostulated likewise against the harshness with which occasionally authors were treated, who were dragged before the editorial tribunal, as likewise on the disparaging tone assumed by the "Review" on matters pertaining to America; but his sentiments on such topics were unknown to or overlooked by the public at large, and as a prominent contributor he underwent much personal abuse for the very blemishes which he had anxiously endeavoured to remove.

In the summer of 1809, he received a severe shock by the sudden death of one of his daughters. His eldest boy had been dangerously ill, and had barely recovered before another child was struck. In relating the circumstance to a friend, he writes: "We lost Emma yesternight. I have five children; three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven." As his expenses increased, he found it incumbent on him to think less of futurity, and more of the present hour; and periodical writing encroached upon the time he would otherwise have alloted to his more ambitious efforts. In 1808, Ballantyne the publisher had projected an "Annual Register," and requested Southey's co-operation. In 1809, Ballantyne again wrote, asking him to write the history of the Spanish affairs for that year; and afterwards, on being disappointed in one of his contributors, entrusted to him the historical department generally, with an allow-

ance of £400 a-year. This, as yet, was the most profitable engagement he had entered into. He took an interest in the subject, and calculated that if it lasted two or three years his property in the Longmans' hands would clear itself, and he should be in a fair way of relieving himself from pecuniary uncertainties. The boldness of his views touching our policy in Spain, alarmed the timid acquiescence of "The Edinburgh Review," which recommended the most abject submission on the part of this country to the designs of the invincible Napoleon: and in somewhat strange discordance with its professions respecting the unlimited liberty of the press, it recommended the obnoxious journal for government prosecution, which hint, however, was wisely left unnoticed. This engagement was of short duration, as the affairs of the publisher rendered a discontinuance of the work imperative.

In the summer of 1811, a strange apparition appeared at the Lakes. Shelley, with his young wife, took up his abode there for a short time; and in his dreaming restlessness and Utopian enthusiasm, he seemed to Southey like the shadow of his wild former self. The two poets formed an acquaintance. The elder could sympathize with the younger, for he had himself passed through his agonizing phase; and Shelley, for the first time, fancied he had found one who could understand his nature. Like a meteor he flitted to disappear in other lands; but Southey watched his wanderings with charitable sorrow, and, notwithstanding angry words, and unjust accusations, always spoke of him with tenderness.

In 1813, Pye died. A semi-official offer of the laurel was made to Sir Walter Scott, who mentioned Southey as one who would adorn it by his talents, and to whom the additional income would be acceptable. A few years previously, Sir Walter had interested himself with his political friends, Mr. Canning and others, in favour of his brother

bard. Southey had suggested the creation of the office of Historiographer as an appropriate one for him, but on inquiry, he found such a one already existed; and on the death of the person holding it, shortly afterwards, his application was anticipated. The appointment was honorary, there being no salary attached.

On the receipt of a letter from Sir Walter Scott, Southey proceeded to London, and had an interview with Croker. Relating the circumstance he says: "He (Croker) had spoken to the Prince, and the Prince observing that I had written some good things in favour of the Spaniards, said the office should be given me. You will admire the reason, and infer from it that I ought to have been made Historiographer because I had written 'Madoc.'" It is singular how seldom poetical merit of any kind has been regarded as the qualification necessary for holding the solitary office in England professedly tenable only by a poet. It was on the occasion of this visit to London that Southey met Lord Byron at Holland House; and the prejudices, perhaps just ones, he had conceived against the noble poet melted away amid the fascinations of his prepossessing manners. "I saw a man," he writes, "whom in voice, manner and countenance, I liked very much more than either his character or his writings had given me reason to expect." On the acceptance of his new office, he had intimated some hope that the disagreeable requirements of annual celebration might be in some degree dispensed with, and was led to expect that some such rational arrangement would be made. But no reformation of the kind was attempted, and after waiting some weeks, he was admitted to be sworn in, in the customary way. He then left London, resolved to acquit himself to the best of his ability; but to exercise his discretion about giving to the world his official inspiration.

The regularity of home life was occasionally relieved by

the visits of tourists, mountain pic-nics, and other similar festivities. When the news arrived of the victory at Waterloo, it was resolved to celebrate the event on the top of Skiddaw. The country round poured forth to the gathering. Old and young, peer and peasant, climbed the ascent; and the huge bonfire of blazing tar-barrels on its summit darkened the skies by its excessive brilliancy. There they prepared the historical dishes of Old England, the wine-cup circulated freely, and with every toast, the report of their cannon was lost in the louder tumult of their vociferous cheering. Large flaming balls of tow and turpentine were sent rolling down the mountain-side, and the calm still night was especially propitious for the revel. An incident has been commemorated, not very poetical, but not on that account the less amusing. On a demand being made for more punch, it was discovered that the kettle had been upset. Water at such a place was not a commodity to be recklessly wasted, and a lady of the party indignantly commenced a vigorous search for the offender. An officious informer revealed that one of the gentlemen had done it, and that he had a red cloak on. Wordsworth had thrown round his shoulders a garment of that colour, belonging to Mrs. Southey. After the accident—for the culprit was no less a man than he—he had mingled with the crowd, and flattered himself the *contretemps* had been unobserved. But the pride of the purple was his debasement. Miss Barker informed Southey of the discovery, who expertly got his party together, gradually encircled the guilty bard, and suddenly saluted his ears with the following banter, chanted in full chorus: "'Twas you that kicked the kettle down, 'twas you, Sir, you." They all returned safely about midnight, a line of fire from the dripping torches tracing the course of their descent.

At the close of the war, society in England was in a most agitated state. The prodigious sacrifices made by

the country had been lessened in popular estimation at the time, by the chivalrous sentiment of the people, and the hardships they would entail forgotten in the excitement of the strife; while an artificial prosperity was produced in certain departments of trade, by the very expenses of the contest. When European commerce was set free, and things relapsed to their natural level, much alarm, miscalculation and misery ensued. Public obligations remained at their original standard, and consequently pressed more heavily through the rapid rise in price of all necessary commodities, while the crop of the following year fell considerably below the usual average. With distress came disaffection, and interested men were not backward in fanning the embers into a flame, and in preaching insubordination and irreligion. Their pernicious doctrines spread to the most retired nooks and corners of the land. "A club of atheists met twice a-week at an alehouse at Keswick, and the landlady of their way of thinking." And this state of things was general. Southey combated the policy of disaffection with unfaltering energy, and the invective with which he was assailed sufficiently testifies to the dread he inspired, and the good it was feared he would effect. He advocated with untiring assiduity, as the surest means of cutting the ground from under the feet of demagogues, and of enlightening the people to their real position, a more general system of education based upon religious teaching, the diffusion of cheap and wholesome literature, and the importance of training-schools for the neglected swarms of children that were left to wallow in premature vice and wretchedness in the streets of our more populous towns. He urged the establishment of savings' banks, some organized system of emigration, and the imperative interference of government in behalf of the operatives and children that the factory task-masters held in less regard than the machinery they tended. Many of

the plans he proposed have been since adopted, and are now in active and beneficial operation, while kindlier feelings prevail between employers and employed, with a juster notion of their relative claims upon each other.

In the midst of these earnest endeavours for the public good, he was thunderstruck by reading in the papers an advertisement of the publication of "Wat Tyler," and received a copy of the drama in an envelope addressed to Robert Southey, Poet-Laureate and Renegade. This notorious production had been written in his hot youth, and thrown aside in neglect. It was now for the first time formally published through the disreputable contrivance of a dissenting minister; and so great was the sensation excited, and so cunningly had his adversaries watched their timeliest opportunity, that sixty thousand copies are reported to have been sold, and he became the daily theme of vituperation, calumny and abuse. Lord Brougham attacked him, with characteristic impetuosity, in the House of Commons; and a Mr. Smith, the member for Norwich, arming himself with a number of the "Quarterly" in one hand, and the obnoxious poem in the other, followed wrathfully and dully in the wake. An application was made to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the publication of the work; but Lord Eldon, considering that a person could not recover in damages for a work which is in its nature calculated to do an injury to the public, refused to grant it till Southey should have established his right to the property by an action at law. He accordingly left matters to take their course, well knowing that the trial of all things is in the end, but he abated not one jot of his ardour. Renegade, apostate, hireling, these were the epithets that were applied to his name. He, so poor and self-denying, was accused of heaping up wealth by the interested desertion of his principles. "The Edinburgh Review"

attacked him. "The Morning Chronicle" ranted about "his impious and blasphemous obscenities;" and he was esteemed so formidable an antagonist, that Cobbett proscribed him by name, as one of the persons who, when the radicals should have effected a reformation, were, as one of the first measures of the new government, to be executed!

About this time, through some informality in an uncle's testament, he was the loser of an estate of the estimated value of £1000 a-year. Twice before the wanton caprice of testators had deprived him of property which the law, had it been allowed to take its course, would have given him as heir; and now the law interposed to take away an estate which the bequest of a relative would have conferred.

At the Oxford commemoration, in 1820, he received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the University, and never was honour better merited. His writings in defence of the Established Church had been effective and opportune. That, with all other institutions, had been fiercely attacked, not through any desire to reform, but in the wanton lust to destroy; and Southey, whose wildest boyish dreams had had for their end the amelioration of society, could not tolerate the raving atheism which struggled to confound vice and virtue, good and evil, in one wide and lawless anarchy. After the ceremony at the theatre, and a collation at Brasenose, given by the Vice-Chancellor, he took a solitary walk in Christ Church meadow, where he had not been for six-and-twenty years. He describes the day as one of the most melancholy of his life, and so it may well have been. There, where revisiting the haunts of yesterday, we pace the cloisters, and meet only unknown faces, while strange names over the well-known doors arrest one's almost mechanical ingress; how glaring the change wrought by a quarter of a century! He looked up

to the windows of his old rooms at Balliol. Of those who had so frequently assembled there in disputatious converse, some were dead, and all were scattered; and he too, how altered from what he was! The melancholy strain emanating from internal causes is almost the first we hear through his history. He had reached the zenith of his course. The exultation of hope was abating; and his eye now turned, not upwards, but toward the gathering shadows of the evening.

It was about this time the quarrel with Lord Byron reached its acme. In 1819 the two first cantos of "Don Juan" had been published, but the dedication was repressed. It, however, got into print, and was hawked about the streets of London. Southey, in the preface to his "Vision of Judgment," made a severe attack on the doctrine and the writings of a class of authors, of whom Lord Byron was the most eminent, and the most influential. In an article in the "Quarterly," speaking incidentally of the Jungfrau, he said it was the place where Manfred met the devil and bullied him. Lord Byron was nettled, and retaliated. Southey replied by a letter in "The Courier," (5th of June, 1822). His opponent, who was then residing at Pisa, forwarded a challenge to England, which his friend Douglas Kinnaird had the good sense to retain, and the circumstance was never communicated to Southey. It was a quarrel between the petulant spleen of Lord Byron, and the outraged moral feelings of the British public, speaking through Southey. The former was the aggressor throughout, and there can be no doubt on which side was the right; but unfortunately Southey, by his egregious self-pretension, laid himself open to much of the sarcasm which, by its liveliness and force, still excites a smile during the perusal.

During the summer of the year following that of his visit to Oxford, he stayed a few weeks at Netherall the seat of

his friend Mr. Senhouse. The family had resided uninterruptedly on this spot from the time of Edward II., when a part of the existing building was known to have been standing; and how long it had stood anterior to that time there is no record to say. Southey's bed-room was in the tower, the walls of which were nine feet thick. It was a bishop of this family who had preached the coronation sermon of Charles I. from the text which was afterwards thought ominous: "I will give him a crown of glory." A pleasing domestic incident, related to Southey on the spot, may not be deemed out of place here. At the time of the great Rebellion the family of the owner consisted of two sons only. The younger went to stand by his King in battle, the elder was detained at home by sickness. The heir of the house died, and the bereaved parents were anxious for their only son to return, lest their ancient line should become extinct. A trusty dependant who held under them was sent to persuade him back; but the son was deaf to all his reasons, and prevailed upon the man to follow his fortunes in the war. They were at Marston Moor together, and at Naseby, where young Senhouse was severely wounded, and left for dead upon the field with a fractured skull. After the battle, the follower went to search for the body of his master, and to his surprise found life not extinct. He instantly removed him, obtained medical aid, and tended him with watchful care, until with delight he witnessed his complete recovery. In token of gratitude, his lands were enfranchised, and the descendants of each still dwell on their respective freeholds.

Southey's reputation had spread slowly upon the continent; and of his poems, "Roderick, the last of the Goths," appears to have received the most favour. A French translation of this work was forwarded to Southey, with his life prefixed. The present was accompanied by a letter from the lady to whom the book had been dedicated,

informing Southey of the principle upon which his biography had been compiled, It seems the publisher, with the wilfulness common to the class, had insisted on the necessity of their work being preceded by a life of its original author. In vain was it represented that there were no adequate materials for such a production. "What matters that?" said the pertinacious publisher. "Write it notwithstanding. Invent a little—invent—whether it's true or whether it's false, who'll take the trouble to inquire?" And upon this hint, wrote the lady, the work was accomplished.

A few years afterwards, he received a Dutch translation of a part of the same poem by Mrs. Bilderdijk, accompanied by a Latin letter from her husband, a veteran author of sixty years' standing. The work was dedicated to Southey, in some pathetic lines occasioned by the death of a son at sea, and she had applied some stanzas in his poem to herself before hearing of her loss. The circumstance induced Southey to decide upon a tour in Holland in the summer of 1825, purposing to visit Leyden, where his esteemed correspondent resided. He was accompanied by Neville White, Henry Taylor, and a young officer of the name of Malet. They crossed from Dover to Boulogne, visited Waterloo; and at Brussels Southey was delighted to find his old friend Verbeyst, the celebrated bookseller, thriving well in the world. He had purchased from him, on a former occasion, a copy of the "Acta Sanctorum," a light work of fifty-two folios for his evening reading, the arrival of which at Keswick formed an epoch in his life. He again roamed through his spacious shop of three hundred thousand volumes, selected his purchases, and quaffed the choice claret and Burgundy, the hospitable bibliopole produced in honour of his illustrious visitor.

A slight mishap interrupted his journey. His foot had

been chafed, and became so inflamed, that at Antwerp he was compelled to resign himself to the hands of a surgeon. He remained there several days, and suffered more pain in a week than he had previously experienced through his whole life. On his arrival at Leyden, he found himself unable to proceed further, and intended to repose himself at an hotel. Immediately that his arrival was known, Mr. Bilderdijk hastened forth to offer the hospitalities of his house. Southey felt some hesitation to trouble him with an invalid, but succumbed to the pressing solicitation, and at length frankly accepted the offer. He was extremely anxious to see Mrs. Bilderdijk, Mrs. Bilderdijk no less anxious to see him. The learned lady was not superior to the prevailing weaknesses of the sex; and to her eager question respecting his personal appearance, her husband answered that he looked as Mr. Southey ought to look; a reply which delighted the inquirer and gratified the poet.

Southey remained under their roof three weeks. Mr. Taylor stayed at Leyden with him, while the rest proceeded onward, proposing to re-assemble at some distant point in the route. Never had Southey a more joyous holiday. His minutest tastes were consulted, while his hostess was most considerate and assiduous in her capacity of nurse; and with Bilderdijk's broken English and Southey's Dutch, the conversation never flagged. Our author proposed to repay his host for his cheerful entertainment as he had repaid his friend Cottle years before. He sent for a complete set of his "Poems," and his "History of Brazil;" an inexhaustible source of exhilaration for all coming years at Leyden. They parted with mutual regrets. "No part of his life," he observed, "ever seemed to pass away more rapidly or pleasantly."

Were there truth in the ancient notion of the Divinity

of Fortune, we might not inaptly imagine that the faithless Goddess, in her sad irony, had indulged him with this short glimpse of unusual happiness, in bitter mockery of the impending sorrow. He turned his steps homewards about August, hastening to communicate his joy to those whom he knew would be anxious to participate in it; but his spirits fell when he caught the blank aspect of the faces that were waiting to receive him, and he heard with a pang the unexpected tidings that his daughter Isabel was lying dangerously ill. He had lost the elasticity of youth, and grief now took a firmer hold of his frame. Day after day was spent in anxious solicitude; his spirits rose or fell with the flickering malady of his child; and his son records, in an affecting passage, how he paced the garden in uncontrollable anguish, and gathered his household around him to prayer when all was over. Ere her remains were laid in the dust, the sorrowing father addressed a letter to her surviving sisters, in which occurs the following passage:

"And for the dear child who is departed, God knows that I never heard her name mentioned, nor spoke, nor thought of her without affection and delight. Yet this day, when I am about to see her mortal remains committed earth to earth, it is a grief for me to think that I should ever by a harsh or hasty word have given her even a momentary sorrow, which might have been spared."

This was the first serious blow to the happiness of that cheerful circle. The gap was too painfully visible for its effects to be readily effaced, and Mrs. Southey never recovered completely from the shock.

Had Southey regarded literature but as a stepping-stone to worldly consideration, he might have found an opiate for domestic affliction in the excitement of public rivalry. During his absence in Holland, he had been elected,

through the influence of Lord Radnor, to represent in Parliament the borough of Downton. A report to this effect reached him while at Brussels, and on his return, he found a letter awaiting him, announcing the event. Referring to his "Book of the Church," the writer adverted to the principles there so perspicuously advocated, proposing to him the single requisition, as a public man, "Ut sustineat firmiter, strenue et continuo, quæ ipse bene docuit esse sustinenda." But he was not possessed of the necessary property qualification, and a plan was proposed to purchase one by subscription, in which Sir Robert Inglis greatly interested himself. He was amazed on hearing of this further endeavour to induce him to enter Parliament. "I rubbed my eyes," he writes, "to ascertain that I was awake, and that this was no dream." But he declined to countenance any such attempt to divert him from his settled course of life, and wrote to the Speaker, announcing his election as void, on account of his ineligibility.

In 1829, his household was further diminished, by the marriage of Miss Coleridge, who, with her mother, quitted his roof, after an abode there of twenty-six years; and not long afterwards his eldest daughter married, and left to reside in Sussex.

In October of the following year he paid one of his customary visits to London, and entered more into society than was his wont on such occasions. He dined with the Duchess of Kent, and was gratified by the Princess Victoria, then but eleven years of age, thanking him for the pleasure she had received in reading his "Life of Lord Nelson." He dined also with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and received invitations from the Duke of Wellington and other prominent men. At the levee, to his surprise, his hand was grasped and warmly shaken by the Lord Chancellor Brougham, who seemed to have forgotten his

former excessive animosity, and he shortly afterwards received from his Lordship a letter, proposing two questions for his consideration; namely, whether literature would gain by the active encouragement of government, and if so, in what way such encouragement could be most advantageously given? Southey, in his reply, observes that co-operative labour seemed necessary for large works, and that some national institution would enlist sharp-shooting pamphleteers in the cause of order, but it is doubtful whether with our present manners and modes of thinking any such organization is practicable; and if practicable, whether it would be productive of any essential benefit. "With regard to prizes," he writes, "methinks they are better left to schools and colleges. Honours are worth something to scientific men, because they are conferred on such in other countries, while at home there are precedents for them in Newton and Davy, and the physicains and surgeons have them. In my judgment, men of letters are better without them, unless they are rich enough to bequeath to their family a good estate with the bloody hand, and sufficiently men of the world to think such distinctions appropriate. For myself, if we had a Guelphic Order, I should choose to remain a Ghibelline."

To these sentiments we heartily subscribe, and strongly protest against the view put forward by a witty contemporary novelist, who contends, that a book-maker ought to be knighted, because his wife would like to be called "My Lady." Authorship has been regarded as a profession, it is daily degenerating into a trade; it ought to be neither. Let worldly honours be granted for actions they may not incongruously embellish. To literary men, as such, they are absurd and out of place.

But few of Southey's works proved lucrative. Their tardy sale stands in remarkable contrast with the rapidity

with which successive editions were exhausted of those of his friend and fellow-labourer Sir Walter Scott. In December, 1828, writing to Mr. Bedford, he says: "For myself I am very far from complaining of Government, to which indeed I owe much more than to the public. You know what His Majesty is pleased to allow me through your hands. Now, from the said public, my last year's proceeds were, for 'The Book of the Church' and the 'Vindiciæ,' per John Murray, nil; and for all the rest of my works in Longman's hands, about £26. In this account, you know, the 'Peninsular War' and the 'Life of Nelson' are not included, being Murray's property. But the whole proceeds of my former labours were what I have stated them, for the year ending at Midsummer last: so that if it were not for reviewing, it would be impossible for me to pay my current expenses. As some explanation, I should tell you that 'Roderick' and 'Thalaba' and 'Madoc,' are in new editions, which have not yet cleared themselves. They are doing this very slowly, except 'Roderick,' for which, if it had been clear, I should have received £35." Money, although he was in such pressing need of it, was never his immediate concern and object. Perhaps had he allowed his necessities more directly to influence his pen, the public, as well as himself, would have been the gainers. He might have chosen subjects more attractive, and have condensed his efforts into a compass more suitable to the wants of a hasty and impatient generation. But there was a nobleness even in his error. And this lofty disdain of mere popularity becomes the more valuable in its teaching, as instances of it become more rare.

Southey, without being reckless or extravagant, was at times careless of his resources, considering their limited extent; and any whim that might add to the stock of his books, he felt it almost impossible to resist. In Mrs.

Southey he found a helpmate, to whose wise and prudent economy he was chiefly indebted for that domestic serenity he so dearly prized. But to maintain it, was for her a constant source of depressing perplexity. The expenses were large, the income uncertain and precarious, and when at last the weight of affliction was superadded to her other cares, the mind gave way, exhausted by the anxieties of her ceaseless though unobtrusive exertions.

In the autumn of 1834, Southey undertook a melan-lancholy journey. Writing from York, he says: "I have been parted from my wife by something more than death. Forty years has she been the life of my life; and I have left her this day in a lunatic asylum." Yet he could discover a cause for gratitude. "I have much to be thankful for under this visitation. For the first time in my life" (and he was now sixty-one years of age) "I am so far beforehand with the world, that my means are provided for the whole of next year; and I can meet this additional expenditure, considerable in itself, without any difficulty." In the midst of this affliction he received a letter from Sir Robert Peel. "I have advised the King," writes the Prime Minister, "to adorn the distinction of baronetage with a name the most eminent in literature, and which has claims to respect and honour which literature alone can never confer." A private note accompanied the letter, containing assurances of respect, and requesting to know how he could advance his interests. Southey declined the honour, his restricted means would have rendered it a mockery. "Writing for a livelihood," he observed, "a livelihood is all that I have gained; for having also something better in view, and never having courted popularity, nor written for the mere sake of gain, it has not been possible for me to lay by anything."

Sir Robert Peel was doubtless surprised at the disclosure; for it was a prevalent belief that he had amassed

large sums by the sale of his works, and he lost no time in performing one act of grace at least during this short tenure of office. He offered him £300 a-year from the Civil List Pension Fund, which he granted on "a public principle, the recognition of literary eminence as a public claim." This timely assurance of a definite income relieved Southey from all future anxiety respecting the supply of his daily necessities. It rendered him also independent of the publishers; and he congratulated himself on being able henceforth to devote himself entirely to his great works, and in particular to his "History of Portugal;" and to partake of his favourite relaxation of travel whenever failing health demanded it.

After Mrs. Southey had been about a year at York, she was so far recovered as to make her return home a desirable step. "If her illusions," writes her husband, "are like dreams to her, the reality is like a dream to me, but one from which there is no awaking." He devoted himself to her care with a sorrowful satisfaction. He was not one to shrink from an obligation, and devolve upon his daughters or dependants a task he deemed it was his more especial duty to undertake. She had made it the pride of her life to minister to him in his health, he would minister to her in her helplessness; and all that human concern could do, he did, to alleviate her hapless condition.

In the summer of 1836 his old schoolfellow Grosvenor Bedford, accompanied by his niece, stayed with him; and although his visitor was almost deaf, they managed to have much talk of old times. They had been acquainted from 1788, familiar from 1790, intimate from 1791. Rev. Edward Levett, another Westminster contemporary, visited him likewise at the same time. At the summer assizes this year he was subpœnaed with other literary men to appear as a witness, on a celebrated will case then pending, involving the Castle Hornby estate, of from

£6000 to £7000 a-year. His assiduity towards his afflicted wife had prevented him from taking his accustomed recreation, and he embraced the occasion of this compulsory absence, to make, in company with his son, a rapid trip to the West of England. He visited, with childish curiosity, all his old haunts; the house in which he was born, the schools to which he had been sent, the church, Miss Tyler's house: Martin Hall, his former abode at Westbury, he was unable to recognise. During these researches, his friend Walter Savage Landor was an unfailing companion.

On the 16th November, 1837, his wife died. For some time previously she had been daily sinking, and the last glimmer of consciousness seemed to be the assurance that she was tended by those who best loved her. During the three years she had laboured under her affliction, the anxieties of Southey had been relieved by the exertions they occasioned. The performance of those duties which, as a husband, he conceived it would have been selfish and unworthy to relegate to others, had diverted his mind from brooding over his increasing calamities. But when the solemn blank in his home and heart, caused by the bereavement, first presented itself broadly to his feelings, his spirit sank within him, and he felt in truth that "the life of his life" had departed. His accustomed occupations afforded not the relief one would have expected they would have done from his habits and manners. The bride of his youth, the companion of his manhood; she had shared all his joys, had alleviated all his sorrows. With her, happen what might, there was hope; without her, what worth hoping for? It was too late now to begin the journey of life afresh—there was no inspiration in the future, and the past was a vanished dream. But what had already transpired was but as the rehearsal of another and similar tragedy. Mental anxiety had unhinged the faculties

of the wife, over-exertion prostrated those of the husband. The first indications of imbecility were so slight, the approaches so gradual, that they escaped the attention of his nearest friends. Failure of memory, confusion of time and place, starts of irritability so foreign to his nature, these were all overlooked at the time, but too faithfully remembered when the appalling reality broke upon them.

In the latter end of 1838, he was urged to undertake a short trip on the continent; and a party of six met in London, and started on a tour through Normandy and Brittany. On their return to England, they separated; his son, who had been one of the party, proceeding to Oxford; and Southey purposing to stay at Buckland, the residence of Miss Caroline Bowles, on his way home. He afterwards proceeded to London, and the change in his condition became painfully perceptible. It was hoped, however, that the derangement might be but temporary, and that his faculties would be re-invigorated by repose; but the bow had lost its spring, the tendon was too fretted to be re-braced. He ceased from his labours—with him how sad a proof of sheer inability to proceed!—the over-tasked brain refused all further exercise, the hand declined for ever its habitual occupation.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the alienation of mind became complete. Still would he wander among his books, and fix a vacant gaze on those changeless friends of fifty years; take down from its shelf some well-worn volume, and tenderly replace it; and long he continued mechanically to read, after all power of comprehension was gone. Still, too, visions of great works yet unaccomplished floated across his phantasy. "The History of the Monastic Orders," "The Doctor," and above all, "The History of Portugal." This, the darling dream of his life—the first high effort he had meditated in boyhood among the beauties of the clime it was to celebrate—"the

Doric monument of eternal durability" that should fix his name imperishably in the world's annals—was still a dream—a promise unfulfilled. We need not linger over the sad picture. He gradually became weaker and weaker, and died, after a short fever, on the 21st March, 1843.

They laid him in the quiet churchyard at Crosthwaite, within the shadow of the home he loved so well. And not alone, for by his side rests sleeping his gentle, his all-trusting Edith. They were as one in life, in death they are not divided. There, too, are the children, who, ere soiled by sin or sorrow, preceded to their blissful beatitude, to give him welcome when his toil should be over. Cities may rear their votive tablets to his memory, but his remains could not have a more appropriate resting-place.

It would be incommensurate with the plan of this work to give any detailed account of Southey's literary labours. His writings alone constitute a library. We reckon forty-five independent works, one hundred and twenty-six articles in the "Quarterly," and fifty-two in the "Annual Review." The historical part of "The Edinburgh Annual Register" for 1808 and the two following years was by him; and innumerable other pieces, scattered over various periodical publications, proceeded from his indefatigable pen. Will the prize be his he so ardently coveted? In early life he beheld, in a dream, "the Elysium of the Poets, and that more sacred part of it in which Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Spenser, Camoens, and Milton were assembled. While I was regarding them," he wrote, "Fame came hurrying by, with her arm full of laurels, and asking, in an indignant voice, if there was no poet who would deserve them? Upon which I reached out my hand, snatched at them, and awoke." Later he observed: "One overwhelming propensity has formed my

destiny, and marred all prospects of rank and wealth; but it has made me happy, and it will make me immortal."

We may not antedate the decision of posterity, but we think the dream of the boy a safer omen than the assumption of the man. Nature had gifted him with unparalleled facility—alike his blessing and his bane. Its effect is conspicuous in all he accomplished—epic, essay, history—of all the most alluring charm, and the most fatal defect. The poems he blushed not to compare with "Paradise Lost;" the histories he delivered to the world "in full reliance of the approbation of those ages to which they were bequeathed," are long narrative pieces, invented and compiled too often with little judgment, by a consummate master of language, and unalluring from the remoteness of their subject-matter. "The value of an historical work" he deemed "to be in proportion to the store of facts which it first embodied;" and under this fatal misconception, his ponderous quartos increased in bulk, and he fancied that, while recapitulating incidents, he was writing history.

Thus his histories are mere specimens of prose narrative, manufactured, like his epics, by daily process. His system of reading and writing was so unremitting and so unvaried, that his mind at last resembled a machine, capable of turning out its required piecework, with mechanical regularity. His reflective faculty was deficient in power, because he never exercised it. Living apart from the world, he studied not man in his actions, and his perpetual reading left him no time to study human nature in himself; and thus his history is deficient in the deeper and more essential elements, and while poring over his prolonged pages, we sigh for the masterly portraiture of Clarendon, or the wide and vigorous grasp of thought that informs the great production of Gibbon.

His qualities as a poet were of a high order, but not of the highest. He possessed great imaginative power, his language is clear and vigorous, free from vagueness and the shallow affectation of profundity, while the elaborate machinery of the ancient mythologies he handles with a Titan's grasp. But through all his efforts, there is a something wanting which is indescribable, but which is the soul of poetry. They are but as the lifeless copy, which we leave for the breathing original. It is the presence of this element, which in spite of their defects will render immortal the writings of his gifted antagonist Lord Byron, those writings which express most tersely the exaggerated passion of a wonderful epoch, and constitute our true "revolutionary epic."

And yet, no writer ever had a higher opinion of his own capacity. This self-confidence breaks out perpetually through the entire range of his correspondence. Writing in his twenty-seventh year, he says: "In literature, as in the playthings of schoolboys, and the frippery of women, there are the ins and outs of fashion. Sonnets and satires have their day—and my 'Joan of Arc' has revived the Epomania that Boileau cured the French of 120 years ago; but it is not every one that can shoot with the bow of Ulysses, and the gentlemen who think they can bend the bow because I make the string twang, will find themselves somewhat disappointed." Of "Thalaba" he says: "Such as it is, I know no poem which can claim a place between it and the 'Orlando.' Let it be weighed with the 'Oberon;' perhaps were I to speak out, I should not dread a trial with Ariosto; my proportion of ore to dross is greater."

Writing some years later of "Madoc," he observes: "Taylor has said, it is the best English poem that has left the press since the 'Paradise Lost'—indeed this is not exaggerated praise, for unfortunately there is no com-

petition." Later still we read: "If I do not greatly deceive myself, my 'History of Portugal' will be one of the most curious books of its kind that has ever appeared;" and of the Brazilians, he affirms, that his history of their country would "be to them what the work of Herodotus is to Europe." Failure only made him hug the closer this deluding support. If a book fell still-born from the press, the fault lay not with the writer, but in the obtuseness of the readers; another generation would discern its merit. A little reflection might have dissipated much of this egotistical vanity. It reveals the secret of the pertinacious ridicule and opposition he experienced through life; perhaps it is the sole secret of Lord Byron's contemptuous hatred. But though it produced him much annoyance and ill-will, it occasioned probably a far larger counterbalance of happiness: and if the nerve be too delicate to bear the sharp light of truth, let the blind man dream on in his blindness.

To his periodical writings too much praise cannot be given. Easy and flowing, they were exactly adapted to their end, not tasking the mind by any severe ratiocination or profound disquisition, but evolving the different bearings of the subject with pliancy and address, and free from the miserable flippancy some reviewers so marvellously mistake for wit. They were his most popular essays, but he regretted the labour they required, and grudged every moment of time that was not devoted to writing for some future and imaginary public. A proposal was once made to him, that he should superintend "The Times" newspaper. The remuneration offered was on the most liberal scale. It is seldom any want of discernment is manifested on such a subject in that quarter, and we think it would have been Southey's proper sphere. His laborious industry would have been beneficially exerted in a noble

field. A manly and generous tone would have characterized the paper, and his articles would have been of the very highest newspaper merit. But a post of such importance, and the exercise of so vast an instrumentality, presented no temptation to his ambition. His efforts there would have been necessarily ephemeral, whereas he wrote for fame. We question if such aspirants ever obtain their desired reward.

> "Nor Fame I slight, nor for her favours call:
> She comes unlooked-for, if she comes at all."

Thus sang one who has secured the guerdon. Had Homer been apprehensive about his fame, the world would never have been charmed with the "Iliad."

We have already noticed his want of self-concentration This abeyance of the reflective faculty will aid in explaining the absurd extravagance of his earlier political views; it will detract, we fear, from the merit of his later labours in the cause of constitutional government. He was swayed primarily by the feelings. When once a cause had taken hold of his heart, he then sought for arguments to enforce it, and urged his convictions with a zeal glowing as with the warmth of personal interest. This will also explain his aversion to scientific pursuits, and his dislike of scientific men, notwithstanding his life-long friendship with Sir Humphrey Davy, and others. "Generally speaking," he says, "I have little liking for men of science; their pursuits serve to deaden the imagination and harden the heart; they are so accustomed to analyze and anatomatize everything, to understand or fancy they understand whatever comes before them, that they frequently become mere materialists; account for everything by mechanism and motion; and would put out of the world all that makes the world endurable. I do not undervalue their knowledge nor the utility of their discoveries, but I do not like the men. My own nature requires something more than they

teach, it pants after things unseen." There may be truth in the above extract, there must be error.

In person he was above the middle height, with dark brown eyes, abundant hair, large arched eyebrows, and prominent mouth. His exterior was prepossessing. "To have his head and shoulders," said Lord Byron, with amusing flippancy, "I would almost have written his 'Sapphics.'" His manners were gentle, and free from all eccentricity. He was open and unconstrained in conversation among friends, though generally silent in mixed society. He disliked arguing, was tender of the feelings of others, and directed his attention to the subjects of conversation rather than the persons with whom he was conversing.

His house was his workshop. He ate, slept, lived amid his tools. Six or seven hundred volumes crowded his bed-room; upwards of two thousand adorned his sitting-room. This room was his favourite, the scene of his greatest labours. Here we see him day after day at his desk, "working hard and getting little—a bare maintenance, and hardly that; writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul; one daily progressing in learning, not so learned as he is poor, not so poor as proud, not so proud as happy." He was always collecting. Passages and attics were gradually filled with his accumulating volumes, which swelled at last to the number of fourteen thousand. One apartment was appropriated to old and disfigured books. These were carefully covered with cotton by the ladies of the house, who indulged their taste, their criticism, or their humour in the selection of the colours and patterns; enveloping a Quaker's book in drab, and so on. This room was jocosely called the Cottonian Library.

His method was peculiar. On the arrival of a parcel of books he would rapidly run through each volume, and

mark all the passages he would ever be likely to want. The book was then allotted its destined place, and his memory was so retentive, that he was never afterwards at a loss where to look for any particular information he might require.

The scene of his labour was likewise that of his happiness and of his highest honour. He had a thoroughly English appreciation of home. There centred all his temporal ambition. As a member of the social commonwealth, his exalted dignity is the glory of modern literature. He was generous to a fault. His services were always at the requisition of the needy. Strangers applied, and were sure of relief. Relatives were unfortunate, his purse was always open. Coleridge, incomprehensibly callous to the most powerful of human instincts, coldly abandoned wife and children; Southey was more to them than a husband and a father. Let the character of the man stand out in its deserved prominence, simple in his tastes and open-hearted, to shame a luxurious and a selfish age: enthusiastic in his calling, to kindle a like flame in a generation, that, amid dissolving institutions and opinions, seems destitute of any settled aim and conviction. There is no need here to ask in behalf of genius an indulgent oblivion of vice and immorality. His most notorious failings were venial, solely indicating his common union with human imperfection. His career may be accused of inconsistencies, his mental organization may betray some glaring defects; but he has left behind him a name that will long stimulate by its ennobling example, and a reputation of which his countrymen may be justly proud.

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Who is this musing Pilgrim of Poesy, wandering amid the lakes and mountains of Cumberland? For fifty years his name has been a centre-point of controversy and criticism in English literature. He has been in turns satirized and eulogized, scorned and worshipped, feebly imitated, and flippantly assailed. How little that can excite us in the story of that calm career! How much in it to interest and instruct! For this man stepped aside from the stir and strife of the outer world to those romantic solitudes with which his name will be for ever associated. Here he worked out his self-adopted mission, and toiled at his labour of love. To that long seclusion, and that laborious self-teaching, we owe all that he has left to us. To that steady self-reliance and cherished unity of purpose are due every beauty and every fault of that genius which has so much influenced the thought and changed the taste of our generation.

William Wordsworth was the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney. He was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland. His lineage, both on his father and mother's

side, is good. The ancestry of the former settled in Yorkshire before the Norman Conquest, and the latter was descended from the Crackenthorpes, who, from the time of Edward III. had been the proprietors of Newbiggen Hall, in Westmoreland. William's childhood was spent partly at Cockermouth, and partly with his mother's family at Penrith. Of his early days he has left some brief account, and made especial mention of his mother, who died of a decline when he was at the age of fourteen, and had just returned from school, at Hawkeshead. He tells us: "I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast, when I was going to say the Catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. I remember also telling her on one week-day that I had been at church, for our school stood in the churchyard, and we had frequent opportunities of seeing what was going on there. The occasion was a woman doing penance in the church in a white sheet. My mother commended my having been present, expressing a hope that I should remember the circumstance for the rest of my life. 'But,' said I, 'mamma, they did not give me a penny, as I had been told they would.' 'Oh!' said she, recanting her praises, 'if that was your motive, you were very properly disappointed.'"

It is strange that she once said to a friend that William was the only one of her five children about whom she felt any anxiety; and that she had a strong presentiment that he would be remarkable either for good or evil. Her fears were occasioned by the child's strange and impetuous temper. He tells us that while staying at the house of his grandfather, at Penrith, he retired to the attic to commit suicide, because he fancied that he had suffered some indignity. "I took the foil in hand," he says, "but my heart failed."

The days of his boyhood he always looked back upon as

very happy. He was allowed at school and in vacations to read what books he liked, and revelled in the works of Fielding and Swift; while "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas" were choice favourites. Much as he enjoyed these writings, their influence on his mind is not easily to be traced; and he doubtless gained far more inspiration from the extracts from Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, which, at a tender age, his father made him commit to memory.

"Perlegendi sunt Poetæ," is one of the directions laid down by Cicero, for the education of the Orator. For that of the Poet, it seems even more important. An accurate knowledge of some plays of Shakespeare, and a few books of "Paradise Lost," would be as useful in English education, as the daily repetition of Horace and Virgil, and our schools seem at last awakening to this truth.

William Wordsworth was sent to Hawkeshead, in Lancashire, a school founded by Sandys, Archbishop of York, in 1585. There were four head masters in succession while he was there. To one of these, the Rev. William Taylor, he was especially attached. In the "Prelude" he records his feelings on visiting the grave of his honoured teacher, and also his remembrance of the death-bed scene, to which he and some of the other pupils were invited to receive the last words of the dying man.

It was while at this school that the future Laureate first wooed the Muse whose invoked inspiration was hereafter to be to him its own exceeding great reward. "The Summer Vacation," a subject imposed by his master, was his first poem; and at the age of fifteen he, among other boys, was invited to write lines in celebration of the second centenary from the foundation of the school. It is said that the verses he produced were much admired. Their merit is far above the average of school prize poems; and their marked dissimilarity to the poetical productions of his maturer years is very striking.

In October, 1787, at the age of eighteen, he was sent to Cambridge, and commenced residence at St. John's College. By the University system he seems to have profited little, and he speaks of it with little respect. The daily routine of chapels and lectures, with their regular machinery, and sometimes heartless formality, seems to have affected him with disgust. His ardent soul, warm with youth, enamoured of solitude, and breathing poetry, found little comfort and satisfaction in grammatical niceties or mathematical demonstrations; and as he had learned at school enough of "Euclid" and algebra to give him a twelvemonth's start of the freshmen of his year, he betook himself to more congenial studies, and commenced Italian under a master of the name of Isola, who had known the Poet Gray. An opportunity for distinguishing himself in panegyrical verse he neglected at his first entrance. Dr. Chevalier, master of the college, died soon after; and he tells us that, "according to the custom of the time, his body, after being placed in the coffin was removed to the hall of the college, and the pall spread over the coffin was stuck over by copies of verses, English or Latin, from the pens of the students of St. John's." Wordsworth wrote none. "I did not," said he, "regret that I had been silent on this occasion, as I felt no interest in the deceased person, with whom I had had no intercourse, and whom I had never seen but during his walks in the college grounds."

His chief consolation after the wearying round of studies that did not interest, and discipline that tended only to harass him, was the thought that he was walking where great poets before had walked and mused. What Cicero felt at Athens young Wordsworth did at Cambridge, and rejoiced in the scene familiar in earlier days to his Laureate predecessors, Jonson and Dryden. He took his degree in January, 1791; and as a proof that

he had no desire to excel in his examination, he spent his last vacation among the Alps, and his last week in reading "Clarissa Harlowe."

His vacations, to which he alludes in the "Prelude," he generally spent in wandering among the scenes of his earlier days. His first vacation he returned to Esthwaite. In his last he took a pedestrian tour in France, accompanied by a friend and brother collegian. They left on the 13th of July, 1790, one day before the King swore that he would observe the new constitution. They crossed the Alps, wandered through Switzerland, purchased a boat at Basle, and floated down the Rhine to Cologne, and then returned by Calais, landing in England, in October. How his mind was affected by what he saw on his tour, may be judged from one or two brief extracts from a letter to his sister. "My spirits," he writes, "have been kept in a perpetual hurry of delight, by the almost uninterrupted succession of sublime and beautiful objects which have passed before my eyes during the course of the last month." As a specimen of scene painting, the following description must be quoted. Speaking of the Lake Como, he says: "It is narrow, and the shadows of the mountains were early thrown across it. It was beautiful to watch them travelling up the side of the hills—for several hours to remark one half of a village covered with shade, and the other bright with the strongest sunshine. It was with regret that we passed every turn of this charming path, where every new picture was purchased by the loss of another which we should never have been tired of gazing upon. The shores of the lake consist of steeps covered with large sweeping woods of chestnut, spotted with villages; some clinging from the summits of the advancing rocks, and others hiding themselves within their recesses. Nor was the surface of the lake less interesting than its shores; half of it glowing with the richest green and gold, the

the reflection of the illuminated wood and path, shaded with a soft blue tint. The picture was still farther diversified by the number of sails which stole lazily by us as we paused in the wood above them. And after all this we had the moon. It was impossible not to contrast that repose, that complacency of spirit produced by those lovely scenes, with the sensations I had experienced two or three days before in passing the Alps. At the Lake of Como, my mind ran through a thousand dreams of happiness which might be enjoyed upon its banks, if heightened by conversation and the exercise of social affections. Among the more awful scenes of the Alps, I had not a thought of man or a single created being; my whole soul was turned to Him who produced the terrible majesty before me."

After this tour, he published "Descriptive Sketches." These are very unlike his later poems, and more resemble the sounding heroics of his school prize-poem. They had, however, sufficient originality in them to attract the attention of Coleridge, at that time unknown to Wordsworth. He speaks of them thus: "During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches,' and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon, more evidently announced."

After taking his degree, he spent the next four months in London, and then made a pedestrian tour of North Wales with a friend of the name of Jones. They visited all the most sublime and beautiful scenes. In the last Book of "The Prelude," Wordsworth gives an account of the ascent of Snowdon. It is not very suitable to the plan of this biography to make long extracts from his writings. Those who wish to see how they illustrate his life, must refer to the two long volumes of Dr. Wordsworth. We must, for the most part, content ourselves with recording in our own language, the story of his life.

After mentioning, in his account of the ascent, such an incident as a dog unearthing a hedgehog, with "barkings turbulent," he gives the following sketch of the scene before them, as they reached the summit.

"The moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean; and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle and give up his Majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed moon,
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing place—
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable roaring with one voice!
Heard over earth and sea, and in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens."

A few passages, almost equal to this magnificent description, might be extracted from "The Prelude," and standing in strange contrast to the remainder of the poem, would go far to establish what we have always held of Wordsworth—that he has written some of the very best, and some of the very worst poetry in the language.

After his tour in Wales, he started for the Continent, intending to spend some time at Orleans, and remained a few days at Paris on his way. He has given us, in "The Prelude," an account of his residence in France, as well as that in London. It appears that, until this sojourn of four months, he had before been only "a transient

visitant" to our metropolis. He seems to have looked on London with an eye of romance, and to have revelled in the liberty of a latch-key, without falling into vulgar vices, or idle dissipation. He was an industrious sight-seer. St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the Tower, and the picture-galleries, all came in for their share of his attention. He pored curiously over book-stalls, and loitered to listen to barrel-organs. But the theatre was his chief delight. Night after night, he gazed with rapture on Siddons, and proudly records a visit to "half-rural Sadler's Wells," to see clowns, harlequins, conjurors, and more than all, "the champion Jack the giant-killer." He availed himself of opportunities of hearing all the best speakers of the pulpit, bar, and senate, and has given a masterly account of the impression produced on him by the eloquence of Burke.

After hearing this mighty master of oratory "exploding upstart theory" in the British senate, Wordsworth was quite carried away by the very different sentiments propounded by the speakers in the National Assembly, and at the Club of the Jacobins. At Orleans, he at first moved in the higher and more polished circles, from which political discussion was carefully excluded; but growing weary of this coldness and punctilio, he mingled with the people, adopted their cause, and "became a patriot." In his autobiography, he apologises for having with such ardour embraced republican opinions. His education, he thinks, had predisposed him to these views. He had lived in a sequestered nook of the country, had enjoyed mountain liberty, had there seen nothing of regal power or patrician pomp, and had looked upon the University itself as an intellectual republic, in which individual worth, talent, and industry were of more avail than wealth or title.

He fell into the society of some military men at Orleans,

one of whom, General Beaupuis, he has celebrated under the name of Dion, in "The Prelude." It was from him that Wordsworth learned the love story of "Vaudracour and Julia," with which our readers are doubtless acquainted. The General afterwards fell in battle, and Wordsworth has raised a monument to his memory in "The Prelude." He visited Paris in the autumn, on his way home, and arrived there soon after the massacres of September, 1792.

So much was his mind affected by the scenes of horror which he witnessed, that years afterwards they haunted his dreams. Though very anxious to stay and mix himself up with political parties in the French capital, he was, fortunately for himself, compelled by circumstances to leave for England, and he arrived in London in the winter. Soon after his return, he wrote, but did not publish, a pamphlet, entitled, "A letter to the Bishop of Llandaff on the Political Principles contained in an Appendix to one of his Lordship's recent Sermons."*

"The sentiments avowed in it," says Dr. Wordsworth, "are republican. He declares himself an enemy to an hereditary monarchy, and an hereditary peerage, and to all social privileges and distinctions, except such as are conferred by the elective voice of the people." In writing to a friend at the same time, he says: "Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think, must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement. Hence it follows that I am not among the admirers of the British constitution." He adds, however, that the destruction of the institutions which he dislikes

* We make these brief extracts merely to show what were the Poet's opinions at this period. Those who wish to see this matter very fully discussed, must consult Dr. Wordsworth's Memoirs, a book of which we would fain speak respectfully, because we owe so much to it, but which is unfortunately far too much devoted to proving that Wordsworth was at last ashamed of his juvenile politics, and that if he was ever a Pantheist, he lived to be an orthodox High Churchman.

seems to be going on too rapidly. "I recoil from the very idea of a revolution. I am a determined enemy to every species of violence."

During the summer of 1793, Wordsworth paid a visit to a friend, Mr. W. Calvert, in the Isle of Wight, and after this walked over Salisbury Plain, where he commenced his poem of "The Female Vagrant," and he then proceeded to Bristol, and thence to Tintern on the Wye, and so on to North Wales.

He was now twenty-three years of age. It was time that he should wake up from the dreams of his youth, and abandon the pleasant vagrant life he had hitherto led. His friends were disappointed that he had not distinguished himself at the University. They now called on him to adopt the profession for which he had been intended, and to take orders in the English Church. This Wordsworth resolutely refused to do; and inasmuch as his objections to that course were conscientious, we must honour them, and believe that he was ultimately enabled to do more good than if he had entered the holy calling to which he had previously looked forward. He appears to have entertained a very strong dislike to any profession. He tells his friend Matthews, in a letter: "I have been doing nothing, and still continue to do nothing. What is to become of me, I know not. * * As for the law, I have neither strength of mind, purse, or constitution to engage in that pursuit."

In this state of perplexity, he turned his thoughts to literature; and, as all clever young men do, thought he could start a new periodical. It was to be called "The Philanthropist," a political and literary monthly miscellany. Wordsworth drew up a prospectus. "He would," he writes to his friend Matthews from his uncle's at Whitehaven, "communicate critical remarks on

poetry, the arts of painting, gardening, &c., besides essays on morals and politics." "The Philanthropist" was to have been "REPUBLICAN, but not REVOLUTIONARY." Though, like all new journals, it was, as a matter of course, to have ameliorated everybody's condition, and conferred incalculable advantages on society at large, yet Wordsworth could excite no enthusiasm in coadjutors, nor inspire a publisher or a capitalist with confidence. The scheme fell to the ground, and the promising young paper never saw the light. He was therefore anxious to gain his livelihood as a writer for established journals. He writes again to his young friend, Matthews: "You say a newspaper would be glad of me. Do you think you could insure me employment in that way on terms similar to your own? I mean, also, in an opposition paper, for I cannot abet, in the smallest degree, the measures pursued by the present Ministry. They are already so deeply advanced in iniquity that, like Macbeth, they cannot retreat."

Fortunately for Wordsworth at this most critical period of his life, a kind and generous friend, Raisley Calvert, whom he had nursed on his death-bed, left him the sum of £900. This act, as Dr. Wordsworth very truly remarks, may be regarded in "a public light, as affecting the interests of literature and the welfare, not only of England and the present century, but of future ages and distant lands. If it had not been for Raisley Calvert, or rather for the spirit of love moving in his heart, Wordsworth's best days might have been spent in writing leading articles for 'The Courier,' and the world would never have seen 'The Excursion.'"

The poet has poured forth his gratitude to his benefactor in a sonnet, and also thus alluded to him in "The Prelude:"

"A youth (he bore
The name of Calvert—it shall live, if words
Of mine can give it life) in firm belief
That by endowments not from me withheld
Good might be furthered in his last decay,
By a bequest sufficient for my needs,
Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk
At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet
Far less a common follower of the world,
He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
A necessary maintenance insures,
Without some hazard to the finer sense;
He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
Flowed in the bent of Nature,"

What a help this seemingly small sum was to a man of Wordsworth's simple and frugal habits we may form some idea, when we find him, in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, speaking thus of the account to which he had turned it. "Upon the interest of the £900, £400 being laid out in annuity, with £200 deducted from the principal, and £100 a legacy to my sister, and a £100 more which the 'Lyrical Ballads' have brought me, my sister and I contrived to live seven years, nearly eight."

Giving up now all idea of becoming journalist, and declining to join his friend Wrangham in some imitations of Juvenal, because he had, he said, "come to a fixed resolution to steer clear of personal satire," he dedicated himself entirely to literature, and commenced "The Borderers," a tragedy. It was not completed until November, 1797. During its composition he was visited by Coleridge, who was at the time employed on a similar labour. After tea, one evening, Coleridge repeated two acts and a half of "Osorio," and next morning Wordsworth returned the compliment by reading aloud "The

Borderers." Coleridge writes to Cottle, the faithful publisher of whom we have before spoken, "I am sojourning for a few days at Racedown, Dorset, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth. He admires my tragedy, which gives me great hopes. He has written a tragedy himself. I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and I think unblinded judgment, when I tell you I feel a little man by his side."

"Osorio," Coleridge's play, was refused, though some time after played under the title of "Remorse;" and "The Borderers," also then rejected, was never played, and did not see the light at all until nearly fifty years after its composition. Notwithstanding their failures, it is not extraordinary to find these men admiring and encouraging each other. Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge have all recorded their full appreciation of each other's abilities. They were a great Triumvirate, and Coleridge pre-eminently the greatest of the three. Lacking Southey's unwearying industry, and Wordsworth's unity of purpose, he yet excelled them both. He possessed most of the mental endowments which made them famous, and many others which were denied to them. The poetry of Southey is much of it without inspiration. "Christabel," "The Ancient Mariner," "The Ode on Mont Blanc," and that "On the Departed Year," are among the finest pieces in our language. Wordsworth wanted wit, humour, sarcasm, and dramatic power. Coleridge had all. As conversationalist, poet, critic, and metaphysician, he is almost equally great. The simple poet of nature, and the industrious student and historian, have both done much to teach and to amuse their contemporaries; but neither the one nor the other has so stamped the impress of his genius on the age which he adorned, as did the mighty monologist of Highgate.

After their dramatic failures,* Wordsworth, his sister and Coleridge took a short tour on the banks of the Wye, and afterwards left England for Germany, in September, 1798. At Hamburg they visited Klopstock, and he and Wordsworth had much conversation on literary subjects. They argued on the merits of Wieland's "Oberon." Wordsworth expressed his belief in the superiority of Dryden to Pope, and Klopstock condemned Kant as utterly incomprehensible. They differed as to the difficulty of exciting tears by the pathetic in tragedy. Wordsworth very confidently records, "I said nothing was more easy than to deluge an audience, that it was done every day by the meanest writers." "The Borderers," however, never set pit or gallery weeping, and will not in the perusal excite any violent emotion. At Hamburg the poets separated; and Coleridge went on to Ratzeburg, while Wordsworth and his sister proceeded to Goslar. They severally employed themselves very diligently in acquiring the German language, and after a sojourn of some months at Goslar they reached England early in the spring of 1799. Wordsworth had, while abroad, written a few of his shorter poems. He now settled in the beautiful neighbourhood of Grasmere, visited and described twenty years before by the poet Gray. Here he commenced his autobiographical poem, "The Prelude," and published his second volume of the "Lyrical Ballads." A copy of the latter he sent to Mr. Fox, who after some months delay replied to him, and expressed his admiration of several of them. During his residence at Grasmere he made a short tour in France, and soon after his return took a step which

* In an able and interesting article, which appeared in "The Quarterly Review" in December last, the writer gives a severe, but correct criticism on the Wordsworthian drama. "The plot has neither probability nor ingenuity. We can discover nothing individual in the personages, and no traits or manners in the least distinctive of their age or nation. As to the diction of the piece, a mawkish monotony pervades it, and a beggar woman is the single character who utters a line or two of worthy verse."

ensured to him much of the happiness of his unusually happy life. On October the 4th, 1802, he married Mary Hutchinson, his old playmate at the school at Penrith. His increased means had rendered this step one no longer improvident, for at the death of Lord Lonsdale, who had so long doggedly refused to pay the debt due to Wordsworth's father, his successor immediately disbursed not only the original sum, £5000, but also £3,500 as interest upon it. The wife of Wordsworth must be known and loved by all who admire the genius, and are acquainted with the writings of her husband. He has proclaimed her household virtues, and praised her gentle nature in lines of simple beauty which are familiar to all, and present a charming contrast to such extravagant erotics as the few poets who have not quarrelled with their wives, have sung to their honour.

Wordsworth was keenly alive to the charms of woman's society, and no one ever learned more from it. His sister had been for years before his marriage his constant companion. He has rejoiced to record, and his biographers to repeat, that upon his moral and intellectual nature she exercised an influence the most benign. Indeed, so keen was her perception of the beautiful in external nature, as the extracts from her journals abundantly testify, that we cannot doubt but that she was one of the many "who have never penned their inspiration," and that, had not William frequently clothed her thoughts in poetry, she would have herself indulged the fine frenzy. Fondly as he loved his wife, and beautifully as he has described the graces of her character, it is his sister who will be more closely associated with his poetic fame. She was often his amanuensis, sometimes his critic, and always his admirer. If they did not in partnership "compose at once a slipper and a song," they at any rate sometimes simultaneously produced a sonnet and a stocking.

A year after his marriage, we find that Wordsworth left his wife and youthful first-born at Grasmere, and picking up Coleridge on the way, commenced a tour in Scotland. Wordsworth was a determined excursionist. His vagabond propensities were so strong, that Sir G. Beaumont, at his death, left him an annuity of £100 for the express purpose of expending it in an annual tour. He loved his own neighbourhood. Its scenes were as dear as they were familiar to him. But his love of the glories of Nature tempted him to extend his wanderings. In this tour in Scotland in 1803, he made the acquaintance, or we should more truly say the friendship, of Sir W. Scott; and at Keswick, on his return, he met for the first time Southey. Coleridge had parted from Wordsworth and his sister at Tarbet, after only fourteen days tour; but she and Wordsworth journeyed on through the most sublime and picturesque scenery of the north, and the numerous poems suggested by what met his gaze, were the outpourings of his happy heart, the merry music of joyous spirits, and a kind and genial nature. They reached Grasmere on the 25th of September, and Wordsworth, writing to Scott, says: "We had a delightful journey home, delightful weather, and a sweet country to travel through. We reached our little cottage in high spirits, and thankful to God for all His bounties. My wife and child were both well, and, as I need not say, we had all of us a happy meeting."

A dark cloud of gloom soon broke with terrible suddenness on this happy circle. Captain John Wordsworth, the affectionate and well-loved brother of the poet, was drowned in the wreck of the 'Abergavenny,' East Indiaman. The vessel, to which he had just been appointed, through the incompetency of a pilot, ran on the shambles off the Bill of Portland, and, when they got her off, sank while they were endeavouring to run her on to Weymouth sands.

This sad intelligence filled their house with mourning. Captain Wordsworth had always entertained the profoundest admiration for his brother. He fully appreciated, and, even at the time that the critics were most cynical and severe, predicted the success of the poems. More than this, the object of this very voyage, in which he was lost, was to increase the worldly means of his brother and sister. They were not unmindful of his noble conduct, and their grief occasioned by his melancholy fate was as vehement as it was sincere.

> "Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus,
> Tam cari capitis?"

is the spirit of every line in verse or prose that Wordsworth wrote on the man and his memory.

A few months after this sad catastrophe, our poet brought to a termination his long-life history, "The Prelude." It will be our duty hereafter to express an opinion on its merits. Wordsworth himself, in a letter to Sir G. Beaumont, writes: "It will not be much less than nine thousand lines—not hundred, but thousand lines long—an alarming length! and a thing unprecedented in literary history, that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit, as you know well, that has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was *unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers.*" In writing again to his kind and generous friend, the baronet, he speaks thus of it: "I have the pleasure to say that I *finished my poem* about a fortnight ago. I had looked forward to the day as a most happy one; and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work, such as it is. But it was not a happy day for me; I was dejected on many accounts: when I looked back upon the performance, it seemed to have a dead weight about it—the reality so far short of the expectation It

was the first long labour that I had finished; and the doubt whether I should ever live to write 'The Recluse,' and the sense which I had of this poem being so far below what I seemed capable of executing, depressed me so much; above all, many heavy thoughts of my poor departed brother hung upon me, the joy which I should have had in showing him the manuscript, and a thousand other vain fancies and dreams."

During the next few years, Wordsworth published "The Waggoner," and very many other shorter poems. They sold better than the "Lyrical Ballads;" but he was not one of those whom literature ever directly paid. His was an unmarketable genius, meant to reap its reward from a near if not a late posterity. When about the age of fifty, he says somewhere incidentally: "I have never been much of a salesman in matters of literature, the whole of my returns—I do not say *net* profits, but *returns*—from the writing trade not amounting to seven score pounds."

Notwithstanding the unremunerative nature of his writings, the claims upon his purse grew more numerous, for his family rapidly increased; and the cottage at Grasmere being too small for them all to winter in, they took up their quarters at Coleorton, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in Leicestershire, in a house, the property of Sir G. Beaumont. On their return to Grasmere, they moved into a new house at Allan Bank, where they appear to have lived in great discomfort for upwards of three years. In 1811, they took up their abode in Grasmere Parsonage; and quitting in two years a place where every association was painful, because of the death of two of the children, they finally settled down at Rydal Mount. It was in the smoke-infested house at Allan Bank that Wordsworth wrote his pamphlet on the Convention at Cintra, and Coleridge commenced his now celebrated work "The Friend." The pamphlet on the

Convention is an earnest and eloquent production. It contains long paragraphs of fine writing, and reminds us, at almost every page, of some of the prose works of Milton, having most of their faults, and a few of their beauties. As a political treatise on a great crisis, it must be regarded as a failure; and we know, that despite of the interest of the subject, it met with but a cold reception.*

It was at this time also that he was toiling at "The Excursion," which was not, however, published until the year 1814. We will not here discuss its merits. Most of our readers are acquainted with the celebrated opening comment of the Northern Reviewer. "This will never do!" Undismayed by the severity of the censure of the critic, Wordsworth the following year gave to the world "The White Doe of Rylstone;" and Jeffrey commenced his notice of the poem with a longer but more censorious dictum. "This, we think, has the merit of being the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume; and though it was scarcely to be expected, we confess, that Mr. Wordsworth, with all his ambition, should so soon have attained to that distinction, the wonder may perhaps be diminished when we state, that it seems to us to consist of a happy union of all the faults, without any of the beauties, which belong to his school of poetry."

* We certainly cannot agree with the Reverend Biographer that "if Mr. Wordsworth had never written a single verse, this Essay alone would be sufficient to place him in the highest rank of English Poets;" and still less would it give him a high rank among English Prose writers. In an article in "Fraser's Magazine," Aug. 1850, the pamphlet is lauded to the skies, and compared to Demosthenes, Milton, and Burke. The writer in the "Quarterly" takes a different view. His opinion is, that "the phrascology of his sentences is heavy and frigid; the construction involved; and though he grudges not space, the loose, and circumlocutory diction constantly leaves his meaning dark. But what was least to be expected, there is a poverty of thought even upon subjects which he thoroughly understood."

In 1819 "Peter Bell" appeared, and soon after it "The Waggoner," which had been for many years kept in manuscript. In these he exaggerated every eccentricity and puerility which had provoked those flippant attacks of the critics which had stimulated his sensitive but self-confident temperament to a foolish obstinacy.

In 1820 he made a tour on the Continent, in commemoration of which he two years after published a volume of sonnets and other poems. He was nearly lost in crossing over from Boulogne on his return. In '23 he made a tour in Belgium and Holland, and in '29 he travelled over a great part of Ireland, in company with J. Marshall, Esq., M.P. for Leeds.

The current of Wordsworth's life now flowed on so calmly and evenly, that it presents scarcely any incident which it is necessary to record in so concise a sketch as this.

His worldly affairs were more prosperous, owing to the annuity left him by his generous friend Sir G. Beaumont, and his appointment in 1813 as Distributor of Stamps. His poems, so long at first a drug in the market, were much in demand, and, what was to him far more important than their mere sale, exercised a manifest influence on the first intellects of the day. In 1839, he was received at Oxford with an enthusiastic welcome. He was presented for the honorary degree of D.C.L. by the Rev. John Keble, Professor of Poetry, and author of "The Christian Year," who, in introducing him, said, among other things: "Ad ejus itaque viri carmina remittendos esse hoc tempore putabam, si qui ex intimo animo sentire vellent arcanam illam necessitudinem honestæ Paupertatis cum Musis severioribus, cum excelsâ Philosophiâ, immo cum sacrosanctâ Religione."

The theatre rang with tumultuous applause, and Wordsworth was deeply gratified, regarding it as an important verdict in his favour, and a compensation for the severity

of criticism which he had at first experienced. If Oxford delighted to honour him, Edinburgh might continue to sneer. But we must not forget that here he had a devoted admirer in the gifted and eloquent Professor Wilson, who in "Blackwood's Magazine," did all that in him lay to attract public attention to the beauties of Wordsworth's poetry.

In the year after our Poet's ovation at Oxford, Southey died. Her Majesty at once signified her cordial approval of the proposal of the Lord Chamberlain, Earl de la Warr, that the laurel should be offered to the Bard of Rydal. Wordsworth expressed his gratitude for the Royal favour, but respectfully declined the honour. He writes to the Lord Chamberlain: "The appointment, I feel, however, imposes duties which, far advanced in life as I am, I cannot venture to undertake, and therefore must beg to decline the acceptance of an offer which I shall always remember with no unbecoming pride. Her Majesty will not, I trust, disapprove of a determination forced upon me by reflections which it is impossible for me to set aside."

The office was again pressed on him, with the assurance that it might be considered in his case as a sinecure. He also received from the late Sir Robert Peel a very kind letter, urging him to accept it. "Do not," writes Sir Robert from his place in the House of Commons, "be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* from you. But as the Queen can select for this honourable appointment no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours, I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it." Wordsworth replied gratefully to Sir Robert and the Lord Chamberlain, and upon these conditions, became the successor of Southey.

Two years after his appointment, in writing to his

friend, Professor Reed, he gives him a short account of a visit to London to pay his respects to the Queen. "The reception given me by the Queen, at her ball, was most gracious. Mrs. Everett, the wife of your minister, among many others, was a witness to it, without knowing who I was. It moved her to the shedding of tears. This effect was in part produced, I suppose, by American habits of feeling, as pertaining to a republican government. To see a grey-haired man of seventy-five years of age, kneeling down, in a large assembly, to kiss the hand of a young woman, is a sight for which institutions essentially democratic do not prepare a spectator of either sex, and must naturally place the opinions upon which a republic is founded, and the sentiments which support it, in strong contrast with a government based and upheld as ours is."

He says, in the same letter, of his Laureate successor: "I saw Tennyson in London several times. He is decidedly the first of our living poets, and I hope will give the world still better things. You will be pleased to hear that he expressed, in the strongest terms, his gratitude to my writings. To this I was far from indifferent, though persuaded that he is not much in sympathy with what I should myself most value in my attempts, viz., the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances." After Wordsworth's muse became official, she grew stubbornly silent. An occasional poem, he wrote and sent in manuscript to a friend, but such effusions were "short and far between."

He had established a great reputation, he enjoyed, if not wealth, a competence very comfortable: he had always hated his writing-desk, and his kind amanuensis lay on a

sick bed. We must remember, too, his extreme age. His time was not idly spent in the calm and regular life he led. His early love for out-door rambling, seems to have again revived. He writes in almost the last letter that he penned: "The pleasure which I derive from God's works in His visible creation is not with me, I think, impaired; but reading does not interest me as it used to do, and I feel that I am becoming daily a less instructive companion to others." He might have consoled himself with the reflection how much he had taught, and was at that moment teaching through his books.

There was much, too, which, had he not borne all with cheerful resignation, might have made him sad and weary as he neared the goal in life's pilgrimage. He had cause for sorrow, though not for repining, in the health of his sister, the loss of his accomplished daughter, Mrs. Quilliman, and the absence of so many, removed by death, who had been the steadfast friends and dear companions of his youth.

Not long after his last and saddest bereavement—the death of his daughter—the poet and father was himself called away to

"God who is our home."

On the 7th of April, 1850, he had reached his eightieth year. He had for some days suffered from an attack of inflammation in the chest, but was growing convalescent, and was employed in reading the third volume of Southey's "Life and Correspondence." He, however, suffered a relapse, and, on the 20th, was thought incapable of recovery. On that day he received the Sacrament. "William, you are going to Dora," whispered to him his sorrowing and affectionate wife; and, not long after,

when he heard one of his nieces moving near his bed, he asked, "Is that Dora?" The next morning* he fell gently, without pang or struggle, into the sleep of death. Three days after, he was laid in Grasmere Church-yard, near the graves of his own darling little ones, whom so long before it had pleased Heaven to take from him.

Though Wordsworth has doubtless been seen by many who may read these pages, there are some who may perhaps ask for a description of his personal appearance. He stood about five feet ten, and there was nothing striking or majestic in his carriage. His eyes were weak and not lustrous, but he had a nose "worthy a Trajan or an Antonine,"† and his broad and lofty forehead gave an intensely intellectual expression to a face which was

> "The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone."

In Wordsworth's habits there was nothing very marked or eccentric. He was simple in his tastes, regular and temperate in his style of living, and frugal in his expenditure. His natural spirits were good at every period of his life. If not in his mirth boisterously hilarious, he had an even flow of tranquil good-humour, and in after life a calmness of demeanour which contrasted with the impetuosity of his youth. He was never so thoroughly happy as when wandering in the open air, drinking in the mountain breezes, and basking in the genial sunshine. A peripatetic poet, he composed as he walked abroad, or loitered in his garden. He would trust to his memory to reproduce what he had composed, and his sister would commit to paper under his dictation the result of his

* April 23rd, which, by a strange and interesting coincidence, happens to have been the day on which Shakespeare died, and upon which it is also very probable he was born.

† Quarterly Review.

morning's walk. His aversion to any employment at his writing-desk was inconquerable. This is his own confession: "My writing-desk is to me a place of punishment; and as my penmanship sufficiently testifies, I always bend over it with some degree of impatience."

He was not much more diligent with books than with his pen; and not only was averse to poring long over their contents, but treated their exteriors very unceremoniously. Southey, whose whole soul was in his library, compared Wordsworth among books to a bear in a tulip-garden; and was horrified one morning by his cutting the pages of a volume of a costly edition of Burke with a knife greasy with butter. Wordsworth seems to have indulged a proud feeling of superiority at not being supposed to owe much to the aid of book lore. To Archdeacon Wrangham he writes almost exultingly: "My reading powers were never very good, and now they are much diminished, especially by candle-light; and as to *buying* books, I can affirm that in new books I have not spent five shillings for the last five years, *i.e.* in reviews, magazines, pamphlets, &c., &c., so that there would be an end of Mr. Longman and Mr. Cadell, &c., if nobody had more power or inclination to buy than myself. And as to old books, my dealings in that way, for want of means, have been very trifling. Nevertheless, small and paltry as my collection is, I have not read a fifth part of it."

Wordsworth was fond of gardening, and of paintings he was not a bad judge.

Of his moral character, it would be impossible to speak in terms too eulogistic. We have the testimony of Southey, who speaks of him as follows:

"Wordsworth's residence and mine are fifteen miles asunder, a sufficient distance to preclude any frequent interchange of visits. I have known him nearly twenty years, and for about half that time, intimately. The

strength and the character of his mind you see in 'The Excursion;' and his life *does not belie his writings*, for in every relation of life he is a truly exemplary and admirable man."

We have sought to narrate the events of the poet's career in that spirit of respect and veneration which a life so full of virtue, love, and gentleness must ever command. It now remains that we should speak, with no timid reticence, our opinions on his mental characterictics, the merits of his writings, his position in literature, and his influence on the age. Such a criticism, to be in any way ample or satisfactory, would fill the volume of which this memoir constitutes but a few pages. Much indeed as has been even of late written on Wordsworth's genius, it yet remains for some one, with special qualifications for the task, to calmly and candidly investigate the soundness of his poetical system, and to pronounce upon the success with which he carried it out. We can only state concisely the results of the reasoning process which has led us to our conclusions.

His moral character we have unreservedly praised; and by this we mean, first, that he was unexceptionable in all matters of what has been flippantly called "tea-table morality;" and, secondly, that he was generous and compassionate to the poor and suffering, a good husband, a kind father, and, notwithstanding a complaint of Mr. De Quincey's, a faithful friend. But he had weaknesses of a mixed character, in those parts of our nature where the intellectual and moral elements interpenetrate each other. His warmest admirers would find it difficult to defend him against the charges of vanity, egotism, and obstinacy. Even his relative and biographer is forced into the confession, expressed with considerable *alliterative* power, that Wordsworth, in persisting to exaggerate some of the peculiarities which the critics had condemned, was guilty of

"wayward wilfulness, petulant pride, and random recklessness." Any mention of the wilful impetuosity which led him in childhood to attempt suicide, will perhaps redound to his praise, when we remember by what a creditable self-discipline he afterwards subdued his temper. But there is something less pardonable in his University career. In this he manifested a want of heart and geniality. Whatever the faults of the system and the authorities, Wordsworth cannot escape his share of blame. If not culpably idle, he was doggedly indifferent to the numberless advantages to be gained in such a seat of learning. Though coming up to the University possessed of great talents, and those well cultivated, he refused to write for prizes and compete for honours. Had he been the hero of a debating club, or the leader of "a fast set," we might have regretted energies misdirected to the incompetent discussion of contemporaneous topics, or time wasted by the wayward play of the passions. But Wordsworth avoided such mistakes; and although he admits that he dressed with something of splendour and with elaborate precision, mentions the fact of his getting tipsy in rooms once occupied by Milton, in that tone of maudling childishness with which one gentle "freshman" boasts to another, over tea and marmalade of the daring impiety with which he has that morning absented himself from chapel.

His mental deficiencies are, however, far more glaring than his positive faults. It was a fond and vapid enthusiasm that led him on a sudden to throw himself into the popular side in France; but this impulse, at first only foolish, degenerated into a morbid and guilty feeling when he exulted in the destruction of the troops of his own country, who were, even on the hypothesis that the war was unjustifiable, at least fighting in obedience to orders. There is nothing, too, which is admirable in the suddenness with which he abandoned his early opinions, and

having been the eloquent eulogist of Milton, afterwards panegyrized Laud. It may be, however, but fair to remember in the case of Wordsworth, as in that of the youthful pantisocratists Coleridge and Southey, that, after fifty years of political progress, the youthful radical may appear, without blameable inconsistency—a steady conservative. In such a lapse of time, others have arisen to carry on the work of reform still further, and its earliest and most ardent supporters seem now to be laggards in the rear.

Wordsworth underrated the *critical* faculty, and certainly possessed it in but a niggard measure himself. His views on great political and social questions, on which Dr. Wordsworth appears to lay so much stress, are very far removed from being either sagacious or profound. Indeed, if we judge his intellectual powers by these, we shall be induced to suppose that a premature senility clouded his capacities, and that, after his wayward boyhood was over, he had passed from youth to age without the intervening period of manhood, that he was an old man at the time of life when others are young, and an old woman when he should have been an old man. He had all the faults of one who lived in a little world of his own, and reigned in that petty kingdom supreme.* While his unfamiliarity with what was to other men familiar

* This was written before the Authors had seen the able article in the "Quarterly" before alluded to. They find almost the same view there stated. "The notion he (Wordsworth) had imbibed of the latent capabilities of insignificant objects, led him in the true spirit of system, to select them in preference. Hence sprung some of the merits, and many of the defects of his verse. He brought into prominence numerous neglected sources of delight; convinced that he possessed that poetic stone, the touch of which would turn lead to gold, he not unfrequently adopted trivialities which it was beyond his alchemy to transmute." And elsewhere the Reviewer more tersely expresses the same idea. "His doctrine, that the business of a Poet is to educe an interest where none is apparent, engaged him in efforts to squeeze moisture out of dust."

caused him to find food for poetic musing in what they passed by unheeded, it caused him to magnify trifles, to aim at dignifying the meanest objects, and to struggle, not merely to seek good, but to find poetry in everything. He himself tells us:

> *"To every natural rock, or fruit, or flower,*
> *Even the loose stones that cover the highway,*
> *I gave a moral life. I saw them feel,*
> *Or linked them to some feeling."*

This would be harmless enthusiasm enough, were it not that an undue exultation of what is small has a tendency to weaken our appreciation of what is great. A man who is all wonder at stocks and stones will find his capacities for admiration somewhat taxed by a mountain or a cathedral.* *Nimium admirari* may be less dangerous than its stoical converse, but did it not engender, at any rate, in some of the writings of Wordsworth, garrulous egotism and silly simplicity? He seems to have been totally deficient in a sense of the ridiculous, or, at any rate, to have been blinded to it in his own lucubrations by an overweening self-confidence, and a full realisation of what Swift called "the importance of a man to himself." But for something akin to this feeling, in spite of his disclaimer, what could have induced him to spend years of his life in the composition of such a long, unimpassioned narrative as "The Prelude," which, with the exception of a few gems glittering in the arid waste, is a tedious prosaic account, in blank verse, of a very ordinary existence, in which the author wanders on, registering the minutest and least important incidents with heavy

* Mr. Leigh Hunt, who is an enthusiastic admirer of Wordsworth, condemns this attempt to exalt trifles in his "Seer." "The consequence of this," he writes, "carried into a system, would be that we could make anything or nothing important, just as diseased or healthy impulses told us; a straw might awake in us as many profound, but certainly not as useful reflections, as the fellow-creature that lay upon it."

solemnity, and philosophizing in a method the most tiresome, on events the most trivial?

It is to this cause that we must, perhaps, attribute the fact that, although written by a man of Wordsworth's colossal powers, this poem is, perhaps, the most uninteresting book of confessions ever penned. It certainly will bear no comparison with the painful interest, or the calm self-knowledge which attracts us to the Autobiographies of Rousseau or Goethe, and will be read at a disadvantage by the side of Lamartine's rhapsodies, the fascinating pages of Contarini Fleming, or even the garrulous narratives of Mr. Leigh Hunt and Mr. Jerdan. Is it not this, or some kindred intellectual defect which has prevented this poet from sustaining a long and lofty flight? Why does there occur page after page in "The Excursion" and "Prelude," which is merely prose metrically arranged? How is it that he seldom rises to any elevation without marring the sublimity or beauty of the passage by some mean or vulgar thought? It is not owing to what Mr. Carlyle has called "unconsciousness," because Wordsworth wrote *on a system*, and criticised and classified his own productions. It proceeded rather from a want of critical acumen, which was probably the result of his having relied too much on his moody meditations in his garden, and having neglected his library. That he was but an indifferent judge of the merits of other writers, we may conclude, among other reasons, from the fact of his considering Goethe an *overrated* man, and by his unfair depreciation of the poetical powers of Dryden, Pope, Gray, Sir W. Scott, and Lord Byron.

This depreciation of others, caused him to overestimate himself. Indeed, if we did not believe that he was blinded by self-love to the defects of his own composition, we should be quite at a loss to comprehend why he should ever have stooped to such a simile as that in which he

compares his mind at the theatre, flashing through the many-headed mass, to a kitten at play among straws, and rustling leaves. We believe that this sublime comparison was suggested by his earliest theatre-going during his first sojourn in London. As it occurs in "The Prelude," we are glad to think that it was not elaborated on the night when he, among so many other celebrities, greeted by their presence the first representation of "Ion." In his diary, kept during a tour in North Wales, he speaks with the utmost apparent complacency of some lines on the waterfall at the Devil's Bridge. "It rained heavily in the night, and we saw the waterfall in perfection. While Dora was attempting to make a sketch from the chasm in the rain, I composed by her *the following address to the torrent:*

> "'How art thou named? In search of what strange land?
> From what huge height descending? *Can such force*
> *Of water issue from a British source?*'"

Longinus places interrogation among the scources of the sublime. Here it is more remarkable as an instance of Wordsworth's knowledge of the "art of sinking in Poetry." The shower may perhaps have damped the fire of inspiration.

We may appear to lay too great a stress on the defects of his intellect, and if we do so it is not that we shut our eyes to his sublimities and beauties, but rather because there is a disposition now-a-days, in some people, to look upon all that he wrote as faultless. Wordsworth's works have gone through two phases of the fickle fashions of literary taste. He was at first ridiculed—he was afterwards worshipped. If misanthropy was lisped when Byronism was the rage, surely Wordsworthism has been the "bore" of the last few years. Because the meanest flower that blows is said to give thoughts that lie too deep for tears, daisies and dandelions now suggest a semi-

religious, sickly sentimentalism to the minds of romantic young ladies. One of his biographers—not a lady, but a gentleman—who writes under the pseudonym of January Searle, in speaking of "The Prelude," fancies, by an astounding feat of imagination, that in the perusal of that poem he "is walking up the dim avenues of eternity with the young soul of the poet." We are neither among the idolaters or the infidels. We can only repeat our assertion, that he has written the best and worst poetry in the language, and sincerely regret that the author of particular passages in "The Excursion," of the "Lines to Lucy," and the Platonic Ode, and other perfect poems, should offend by puerilities, puzzle by obscurities, annoy by the frequent recurrence of what we must call vulgarities of thought and language; and never permit us to be out of hearing of the twang of the monotonous chord of egotism.

To say that his mind was essentially and profoundly original, and that he has written perfectly what is grand and sublime, as well as what is simple and pathetic, is to place him, as he deserves to be placed, in the highest rank of poets; but he is not, therefore, without faults; but the secret of his success, and therefore the moral of his life, is, that he discovered the gift within him which it was at once his duty and his victory to stir up. Had he sought to lash the vices of his age as a satirist, he might have sunk into a mediocre imitator of Dryden or Pope. For dramatic composition he was even more unfit—and still less can we picture Wordsworth, a self-exile from his native land, living in Venetian palaces, caressed by Venetian beauties; galloping over plains and swimming rivers; reeling, soul-tortured, on the heights of the Jungfrau; endowed with the strong love and stronger hate of a Corsair or Giaour; battling for the liberties of Greece, and dying young, great, and glorious. We must rather regard his tranquil existence as an interesting psychological study;

but admit that it was free alike from those good and bad impulses and actions, which make the lives of Byron and Shelley more fascinating than the most eloquent romance.

Wordsworth, in quietness and confidence, devoted himself to the task of becoming an original contemplative didactic poet; and, to achieve this, he walked alone with Nature. In the unruffled lake, he saw his own calm soul mirrored, and there read its inmost workings. If he ascended the mountain tops—it was to make those heights scenes for contemplation. Here, with the Latin poet, he may have sometimes felt a sweet satisfaction in watching the pain and perturbations of the errant crowds below; but though he was moved by these lofty sentiments, and reasoned, in stately verse, of the vain labours and empty pleasures of the world—he rejoiced in the joys, and sympathized with the sorrows of all, and loved from his heart every creature of God. This was at once the strength and depth of his character, that his writings are both sublime and simple. To address him in language spoken by him of another, but perhaps more applicable to himself—

> "Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart,
> Thou hadst a voice, whose sound was like the sea,
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;
> So didst thou travel on life's common way
> In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

THE END.

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